

THE GAUCHOS OF HILARIO ASCASUEI.

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Preface.

This study of the gaucho in Argentine literature comes as a result of a personal interest in the gaucho of today, an interest originating in my own personal acquaintance with him as he now lives on the pampas of the Argentine. It has been my privilege to reside in the Argentine for several years. During this period, I was much attracted to this unique character and upon my return to the United States welcomed the opportunity to investigate the gaucho as a literary figure. For assistance in making this study, I am indebted to Professor Arthur Owen for helpful criticism and to Dr. Henry A. Holmes for making his library available to me.

I. Who Is the Gaucho?

In view of the importance of the gaucho in the history and literature of the Argentine up to the twentieth century, it is surprising that there is so little contemporaneous material written about him. This scarcity of comment may account for the fact that a foreigner when he begins to investigate the subject of the gaucho, thinks that he is discovering for the Argentine a new character of whom it has not been properly appreciative, just as José María Salaverría¹ presents the gaucho poem Martín Fierro of José Hernández to a Spanish public as a new discovery. However, upon investigation we find that in the realm of legend, of poetry, of history, of the novel and of the drama, the gaucho is a beloved figure and well heralded by his native land. He is the world's, to be studied, appreciated, honored or criticized. He stands to the America of the south as does the pioneer to the America of the north; a romantic figure, too far away to be possessed of faults, and expressing the free aspirations of every human heart.

He has been compared to the American cow-boy,² with a spiritual difference; to the Arab wandering over Asiatic

1. Salaverría, José María: El poema de la Pampa, Madrid 1918, p. 8.

2. Holmes, Henry A.: Martín Fierro an epic of the Argentine, New York 1923, p. 11.

wastes,¹ with the Arab's fatalism and reserved manner;² to the bard or juglar of old Spain.³ He is all of these in part, for he cares for the cattle in a cattle land, he has the horsemanship of the Arab, and sings his songs from house to house as did the bard of the middle ages. But he is something more: he is himself. He is an individual who has had an impetus which none of these figures had; he fought for freedom as only a product of a new country could fight.

It is the object of this study to estimate some of the things which have been said about the gaucho and especially to interpret him as he is presented to us through the medium of the poetic narrative Santos Vega of Hilario Ascasubi.⁴

Before introducing the gaucho as a character, it might be well to explain as far as possible the etymology of the word gaucho. Unfortunately we cannot give a satisfactory derivation of the word. Commentators are agreed, except one,⁵ that it has an indigenous origin. It may come from the Guichua word huacho which is applied to animals raised away from their mothers; then by the familiar substitution of g for the h (cf. guerto - huerto) and by simple metathesis, we have gaucho; or from a Guichua and Araucana word guasó applied to a country-

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1. Sarmiento, Domingo F.: Facundo, Madrid 1922, pp. 26, 38, 43.
 2. Bunge, Carlos O.: Martín Fierro, in the edition: La Cultura Argentina, introduction, p. 19, Buenos Aires 1902.
 3. Page, Fred M.: Los Payadores Gauchos, Darmstadt 1897.
 4. Ascasubi, Hilario: Santos Vega, Buenos Aires 1919.
 5. Quesada, Ernesto: El Criollismo en la literatura Argentina, Buenos Aires 1902, note pp. 117, 118

man. Many agree with the explanation by Martín de Moussy that it comes from the Araucana word gatchu signifying companion. Paul Groussac attributes to the word a classical origin, coming from the Latin word gaudere, which is found in documents from 1750 on, as gauderio, applied first to country-men of mixed race in Uruguay.

The probable explanation is the first, since the gaucho was often an orphan and of unknown parentage, and the derivation is etymologically possible as that for gauderio is not.

It is interesting to note that the dictionary gives as modern meanings of the word, qualities as different as those pertaining to a woman of the streets and to a noble and industrious individual.¹ Bunge also gives this latter quality to the word.² The Chileans used the word disparagingly of the Argentines to distinguish them from the provincials of old Cuyo.³ In santos Vega the word gauchando⁴ is used, meaning: to tell a story, and gauchada⁵ meaning: a joke. Although the term undoubtedly was applied first to one who was truly a wanderer, and of decidedly mixed blood, it is later found that any one, even though he be a land owner, if he identified himself with the life of the gaucho, learning their ways with the

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1. Garzón, Tobías: Diccionario Argentina, Barcelona 1910, p.225.
 2. Ascasubi: op. cit., p. 18.
 3. Garzón: ubi supra.
 4. Ascasubi: op. cit., p. 34.
 5. Idem., p. 65, verse 1.

horse, the lazo and the bolas, was called a gaucho. Sarmiento calls Rosas, the great Argentine dictator between 1829 and 1852, el gaucho bárbaro, because he had lived with them, even though he was the son of a wealthy Buenos Aires family,¹ and Ricardo Rojas speaks of the gauchesque apprenticeship of Bartolomé Mitre the fourth president of the Argentine.² But this can be safely said about the word, uncertain as is its etymology, and varied as is its meaning, that it does signify for the Argentine romance and love of country.

After one has seen what the youth of the Argentine of today call, "One of these old gauchos," no further proof is needed that the gaucho is a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood. We know that if one of these old gauchos lived in the Osage country of North America, he would be receiving a generous share of the proceeds of some flourishing oil wells. The gaucho is a result of inter-marriage of the first Andalusian settlers of the provinces of the Río de La Plata³ with the Indians either of the twenty-one tribes of the Guaranís to the north of Buenos Aires, or of the Pampas (from which the great Argentine plain derives its name) to the south, or the Araucanians to the west.⁴ The statement is made that in colonial times there was less Indian blood as one approached the coast,⁵

1. Sarmiento: op. cit., p. 183.

2. Rojas, Ricardo: Inter-America, Dec. 1921, p. 71.

3. Menéndez y Pelayo, Marcelino: Historia de la poesía Hispano-Americana, Madrid 1913, Tomo II, p. 446.

4. Page: op. cit., p. 48.

5. Idem., p. 23.

and it was probably true then, but now this difference is not seen except as the continual stream of immigration fills the great city of Buenos Aires with Spaniards, Italians and Germanic peoples. There is no stigma connected with the possession of Indian blood, even though the Indian was the slave of these first settlers.

The negro blood in the Argentine people, including the gaucho, is infinitesimal in amount as compared to the Brazilians. This is owing to the fact that during the colonial period, the negro was never brought into the river Plate provinces in great numbers as in Brazil and North America. During this period England enjoyed the monopoly of the slave trade, and as all foreign commerce was prohibited these provinces by Spain,¹ they naturally had only such few negroes as were smuggled in. The settlers were then forced to resort to Indian slavery for the cultivation of their lands and the care of their flocks. So, just as we find as a result of slavery the mulatto of North America, and the entirely amalgamated negro and Portugese race of Brazil, we find the Indian and white mixture in the Argentine.

Until this point the gaucho has been discussed as if he had already passed beyond the horizon, and were ready to be canonized as the sainted spirit of the past, something gone, never to return: a romance. Indeed it is with difficulty that the gaucho is resurrected and made into a reality, for in

1. Dawson, Thomas C.: The South American Republics, Part I, New York 1903, p. 82.

literature he is consistently treated as a legend. There has been suggested the pretty figure that the gaucho as a race has been vanquished by modern conditions, as the legendary payador¹ Santos Vega was vanquished by the devil himself. As early as 1902 Quesada said:² "The fields today have wire fences, the pampas are cut up by trains, even the rural street cars have abandoned the horse....In the country one can see the chiripás,³ but rarely calzoncillos,⁴ and the traditional colt boot is now almost a myth." In the minds of many, the unfenced plains and the conventional garb have been so intimately associated with the gaucho that their disappearance seems to have marked his passing as well. Again it is said of him that he is known by name only,⁵ or "he is dead, not being able to survive the new atmospheric conditions...he is no more than a symbol."⁶ It is also said that the North American Indians and the cow-boy are only memories. But there exist some very live examples of these extinct phenomena who would resent being called memories. In the Argentine as well, there are certain care-free followers of the herds who enjoy a Saturday night in town, in a fashion very gauchesque, and on their return shoot into the air or lustily sing folk-songs; they are more than symbols.

1. Payador - bard, or singer. 2. Quesada: op. cit., p. 103.

3. Chiripá - form of trouser.

4. Calzoncillos - white fringed pants hanging below the chiripá.

5. Ascasubi: op. cit., introduction, p. 8.

6. Sarmiento: op. cit., pp. 48-57.

To our knowledge, Sarmiento in his virile work, Facundo (1845), is the only one who attributes reality to the gaucho. At that date he was real; too real for Sarmiento. For him the gaucho was a menace, and the barbarisms that he found in the Argentine were owing to the very care-free and romantic existence of the gaucho. Because of him homes were dirty, children uneducated, and crimes committed. Sarmiento wished to introduce immigrants who would settle the country, and make it more progressive. And especially did the gaucho contribute to the sad state of affairs, by aiding the tyrant Rosas. Sarmiento is not content merely to say that the gaucho is a singer, or a desperado. He makes of him a tracker, a guide, a soldier and an honorable family man as well.

Since Sarmiento can be seen as a source in most of the succeeding commentaries, it is surprising that they have not presented all sides of the gaucho, and cannot see his counterpart in the cow-boy, or modern cattle herdsman.

The gaucho is alive today, and it seems probable that he will live for some time. "The Argentine nation proper began its existence when the creole mounted his horse and took to cattle breeding on the plains," says Dawson,¹ and he attributes this beginning to the gauchos who sprang up as a new race, whose business was the herding of cattle.² Argentina still has as her main industry the breeding and raising of cattle and sheep. Leagues upon leagues of land are still grazed by

1. Dawson: op. cit., p. 29.

2. Idem., p. 81.

Holsteins, Jersies and Short-horns, and the fence is still far on the horizon. Within a few hours' ride of Buenos Aires, a city of almost two million inhabitants, one can see in front of the boliches¹ the horses of the gauchos, with the lazo, the recao² and silver mountings as fine as those of Don Laguna the gaucho of Del Campo's Fausto.³ When the owner of the horse emerges, even though he does not wear the chiripá or the fringed pants, he is the same gaucho with the same knife, with which he fights and picks his teeth, conveniently placed in his belt. His handkerchief is at his neck, and his hair is long, after the fashion of his ancestors of the previous century. He probably is as noble and as bad as his legendary predecessor, but it is difficult to see romance in him now. Romantic or not, however, he will continue to be an asset in the production of wealth for the Argentine.

1. Bolicho - wine shop.

2. Recao - saddle.

3. Del Campo, Estanislao: Fausto, Buenos Aires 1920, p. 7.

II. The Gaucho As an Important Figure in History.

No treatment of the gaucho as a character would be complete without picturing him as an important figure in the colonial, revolutionary and civil war periods of Argentine history. Though no great character of gaucho origin comes down in history to be honored by a national holiday, the gaucho as a class is remembered as having made possible the early pastoral colonies, the revolution (1810-1820), and the guerilla warfare of the dictatorship (1829-1852). His ability as a horseman made him an excellent cavalryman. This, with his knowledge of the pampa trail, and his ability to exist on the products of the pampa, made him a match for the better trained Spanish soldier. His daring and courage and extreme loyalty to whatever leader might be in command, made him a fighter not to be overcome easily.

The colonization of the lands of the Río de la Plata came through two distinct channels: the first by way of water directly from Spain, and the second by way of land through Bolivia and Chile.

All of the attempts to colonize by water were unsuccessful. The first white man known to enter the waters of the Río de la Plata was Juan Díaz de Solís. He landed in 1516, but was killed by the Indians, and his little force was annihilated. The second man was Magellan, on his trip around the world in 1519. Though he was a Portuguese by birth, he was in the employ of Spain and took the land in her name. Sebastian Cabot

came next in 1526. His trip up the Paraná river in search of gold was unsuccessful and he returned to Spain in the same year. The first definite attempt to found a colony was made in 1535 by Pedro de Mendoza. He landed two thousand soldiers at the mouth of the Río de la Plata and gave Buenos Aires its name. He also went up the Paraná in search of gold, dividing his forces at the fork of the river. He and his division were wiped out by the Indians, but the other, in command of Irala, went on up the Paraguay river and founded the city of Asunción in 1536. It was an expedition from this colony which was finally successful in making a permanent settlement at Buenos Aires.

The colonization by land did not start until after 1532, when Pizarro conquered Cuzco, the capital of the Aztec empire. The administrative organization of the empire facilitated rather than hindered the conquest of the remainder of the Aztec domain, since the Indians merely substituted Spaniards for their former chiefs.¹ The Aztec empire embraced the highlands, and included only the northwest corner of modern Argentina. The first expedition to enter this section, commanded by Diego Rojas (1542), came for the purpose of conquering the out-lying Aztec settlements.

The first permanent settlement in Argentina was Santiago de Estero, which was settled in 1553 as a result of a southeast movement from Chile. In 1573 Córdoba was founded as an offshoot of this colony. Mendoza in 1561 and San Juan

1. Dawson: op. cit., p. 13.

in 1562 were results of Chilean emigration. To Juan de Garay, a Creole of Asunción, belongs the honor of founding Buenos Aires in 1580. Since he realized that no colony could be permanent except as families were introduced, he imported some two hundred Indians from Asunción to be the first colonizers, with cattle, sheep, mares, and seed as essentials of livelihood, and soldiers to protect them. He divided the surrounding lands into ranches and distributed the Indians native to the pampas as slaves among the colonizing Indians.¹ The life of this community was of necessity pastoral, with cattle raising as its chief industry. The one who tended the herds was the gaucho. So to him may all honor be given as being the first permanent colonizer of the Argentine.

Buenos Aires was a source of anxiety to the monopolies and the government of Spain, for they feared that the English and Dutch would use it as a base for sending gold-seeking expeditions into the interior. In 1599 the first commercial restriction laws were passed, prohibiting all imports and exports on the east coast of South America, under penalty of death and forfeiture of property.² Spain had not yet realized that the wealth of the provinces of the Río de la Plata was in her pastures and gauchos and not in her gold. The result of these trade restrictions was the growth of a great system of smuggling. It is said that under the governorship of

1. Dawson: op. cit., p. 34.

2. Idem., p. 50.

Hernandarias Saavedra, in 1658 the Creoles prospered in pastoral pursuits to the extent of smuggling out 300,000 hides.¹

It was not until the eighteenth century when the surface supplies of gold and silver in Bolivia and Perú had been exhausted, that the pastoral development of the Argentine claimed the attention of Europe. Prices went up with the European demand for hides and wool, and the pastoral lands were extended. The Spanish government became more lax, and general prosperity and national enthusiasm were everywhere evident. The gaucho as a producer of wealth was a recognized economic asset to the American colonies.

Along with this growing economic strength was developing a political independence. Most of the population was Creole, or native born, and was no more subservient to a foreign people or traditional authority than were our North American fore-fathers. In addition to many privileges of a personal nature, the Creole had a political privilege of buying a seat in the Cabildo or city governing body, and could manage many local affairs, or even expel an executive. Two events at the beginning of the nineteenth century were responsible for changing this growing spirit of independence to one of revolution. One was the repulse of the British in their two invasions (1806 and 1807), and the other was the commercial and virtual political freedom gained by Brazil when the Portuguese ruler fled there from the united forces of Napoleon and Charles IV of Spain. The first served to unite the provinces of the

1. Dawson: op. cit., p. 60.

Río de la Plata in a common bond and to stimulate their national spirit, while the second made them wish for the same freedom as that possessed by Brazil.

The immediate cause of the provincial dissensions which led to the revolution, was the abdication of the Spanish throne by Charles IV in favor of his son Ferdinand VII (1808). The Spanish governor in Montevideo took the oath of allegiance to Ferdinand, an act of insubordination to Liniers the viceroy, who wished to wait until the dispute in Europe should be settled before taking action. The Creoles were united on the refusal to accept Joseph Bonapart as ruler in place of Ferdinand, and divided again on the acceptance of the junta of Seville which was set up in the name of Ferdinand. In 1809 the viceroy Cisneros was sent to Buenos Aires representing this junta, Liniers was removed and there was comparative peace for a few months. But on May 25, 1810, an armed assembly met in the plaza of Buenos Aires in the name of Ferdinand, and named a local junta in which the power of the viceroy was to reside. Complete separation from Spain had not been accomplished, but what had been done gave the young liberals in Buenos Aires, and the Creole armies such courage that they started out to expel the Spaniards from the neighboring provinces.

From this period until 1852, when Rosas was removed from the dictatorship, the gaucho was active in Argentine history. In 1811, Artigas with some thousand gauchos from Entre Rios crossed to Uruguay¹ and defeated the Spaniards at Pied-

1. Garmiento: op. cit., p. 73.

ras,¹ a battle familiar to every school child. Sarmiento says that it was a blind instrument which Artigas put in movement, but it was full of life, and had instincts hostile to European civilization and all regular organization. This strength that supported Artigas, i. e., the gauchos, was the same that supported López at Santa Fé, Ibarra in Santiago, and Facundo in Los Llanos.² That is, the gaucho fought for whatever leader might be in control, regardless of the cause. To him any war was a war for freedom.

Another battle was won at Tucumán by Belgrano because the gauchos, mounted on their swift horses harrassed the Spaniards and drove them into the mountains.³ Again after a defeat in Bolivia, Rondeau was able to bring his republican army back to safety, while the gauchos under Guemes protected the border.⁴

The jealousies and the battles that mark these early struggles to evolve a republic from a colonial system are too numerous and involved to mention in a study of the gaucho. However, three events are worthy of mention. In 1813 Belgrano and Rivadavia were sent to Spain to effect some sort of compromise, but unconditional surrender was their only answer. The formal declaration of independence was made on July ninth, 1816. San Martín emerged from the province of Cuyo where he

1. Dawson: op. cit., p. 92.

2. Sarmiento: op. cit., p. 74.

3. Dawson: op. cit., p. 94.

4. Idem., p. 104.

had been preparing himself to be the savior of his country, and gained his famous victory of Chacabuco February 12, 1817. This last was of great political importance, for it renewed the courage of the revolutionists, and provided a base of operations for the later Pacific coast campaigns which finally put the Spaniards out of their strongest hold, Perú.¹

In Uruguay the gaucho provinces revolted against Brazilian dominion, and aided by English and Yankee privateers, successfully defeated the forces of Brazil in February 1827 at Ituzaingo.² This had an important effect on Argentine internal affairs, for it gave an opening for Rosas to become dictator. When Rivadavia the chosen leader of the unitarian party was unwilling to continue the war against the Brazilians, he became so unpopular that Rosas forced the unitarians out of power, and aided by his gaucho bands, made himself dictator. In 1835 he accepted the title of "governor and captain general" and from that year until 1852 when he was banished, the atrocities perpetrated by him and his general Facundo Quiroga, "el gaucho malo,"³ are ever to be lamented in poetry and prose by the Argentines.

During this period many of the intellectuals fled for their lives to Chile or Uruguay, and from a safe distance expressed their hatred for the tyrant in literary cries for

1. Mitre, Bartolomé: Historia de San Martín, Buenos Aires 1889, Vol. II, p. 20.

2. Dawson: op. cit., p. 120.

3. Sarmiento: op. cit., p. 201.

freedom. Bartolomé Mitre, Domingo Sarmiento, José Marmol, Esteban Echeverría and Hilario Ascasubi are names important in this period of the Argentine history of literature.

Sarmiento, writing contemporaneously, of this period said, "Hatred of Rosas has united all the old federalist and old unitarian elements, as well as the new generation, for they have all been persecuted by him."¹ And indeed that is the one service of this man. Relief from this oppression came in 1846 when general Urquiza, one of Rosas' chief followers, broke with his leader and with the gauchos on his lands of Entre Rios he began a series of attacks upon the Rosas forces, which culminated in the victory of Caseros December 24, 1851. Urquiza was rewarded by being elected the first president under the constitution of 1853.

When the province of Buenos Aires joined the republic in 1860 after its jealous fears had been overcome, and the governor, Bartolomé Mitre had signed the constitution, Argentina started on her more or less peaceful course to modern prosperity and fame.

1. Sarmiento: op. cit., p. 346.

III. The Gaucho As a Literary Figure.

In the field of literature as well as in battle, the gaucho becomes the protagonist. He brings honor to the Argentine in praise won from Dr. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo. To him, of all South American literature, the gauchesque is the most original.¹ But it must be clearly understood that he refers to that class of literature produced by men of letters who wrote about the gaucho. To understand this artistic material it is necessary to go back and consider the folk-poetry of the gaucho from which it derives.

The Argentine like his Spanish forefather, finds the origin of his popular literature in the coplas of the dance and in the verses of the bard who sang from house to house his localized version of popular poetry, or invented romances to suit the occasion. This bard, or payador became prominent in 1778, and is said to have wandered from one end of the viceroyship to the other.² All that is known of an early epic poetry which is supposed to have been original with the payador is contained in a reference made by Sarmiento. He evidently was familiar with that type of poetry when he wrote in 1845. Menéndez y Pelayo accepts this as sufficient evidence of its exist-

1. Menéndez y Pelayo, Marcelino: Historia de la poesia Hispano-Americana, Madrid 1913, p. 469.

2. Lehman-Nitche, Robert: Santos Vega, Folklore Argentino, Boletín de la academia nacional de ciencias en Córdoba (Argentina), Vol. XXII, Buenos Aires 1917, p. 1.

ence.¹ Sarmiento says that the original poetry of the payador was heavy and monotonous and was more narrative than sentimental, although he occasionally rose to lyric height.² However there are many coplas in popular memory handed down from father to son which are said to have been sung by the payador, or even by Santos Vega, the legendary singer.

Probably the verses which are sung or spoken in the country dance, are the nearest approach to the original creole or gaucho poetry. These might be compared to the Miller boy or Dan Tucker, North American country dance songs

Favorite Argentine dances are the cielitos, the huella, the gato and the pericón. Vidalitas and tristes are the names of popular songs.

The cielito is a dance in which five couples join hands around a sixth. Between movements of the dance, the gentleman recites cielitos to the lady, who gives other verses in response. This dance is said to be a descendent of the jaleo of Spain, in which the fingers of the dancers of the cielito serve as castanets.³ The following quatrains current at the beginning of the XIX century will serve as an example of a patriotic cielito. The subject is the siege of Montevideo.

1. Menéndez y Pelayo: Antalogía de Poetas Hispano-Americano, Madrid 1895, Vol. IV, p. cxclv.

2. Sarmiento: op. cit., p. 60.

3. Idem.: p. 48.

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Vigodet en su corral | Vigodet in his pen |
| Se encerró con sus gallegos, | Is shut up with his Spaniards |
| Y temiendo que lo <u>pialen</u> | and in fear of being entangled |
| Se anda haciendo el <u>chancho</u> | he is sneaking away. |
| <u>rengo</u> . | |

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Cielo de los mancarrones, | Sky of the old horses |
| Ay! cielito de los potrillos | Oh! sky of the colts, |
| Y brincarán cuando sientan | and they leap when they feel |
| Las espuelas y el lomillo. ¹ | the spurs in the flank. |

La huella is a dance similar to the cielito and with responses, but has a chorus in addition. The following example is taken from the play Calandria.²

| <u>la voz</u> | <u>1st voice</u> |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Por entre tortorales | Among |
| Formando espume, | Forming foam, |
| Va corriendo el arroyo | The stream goes running |
| Pa la laguna. | To the lake. |
| <u>2a voz</u> | <u>2nd voice</u> |
| Ansina mis amores, | Like that is my love, |
| Como el arroyo, | Like the stream, |
| Van buscando los lagos | It hunts two lakes |
| Que son tus ojos... | Which are your eyes... |

1. Zaballós, Estanislao S.: Cancionero popular, Buenos Aires 1905, p. 153.
2. Leguizamón, Martíniano: Calandria, Buenos Aires 1898, p. 135.

Coro

A la huella, huella,
Huella sin cesar,
Abrase la tierra,
Vuélvase a cerrar.

Chorus

To the track, to the track,
Track, without ceasing,
The earth opens
And shuts again.

Another favorite dance is the gato in which only two couples participate. The escobilla (stamping) and the castanet are essentials of the dance. The seguidilla is the verse employed as best suited to the music of the dance. An extra line: Ay de la infeliz madre! is introduced.

El amor es un niño
Que cuando nace,
Con muy poco que coma
Se satiface.

!Ay! de la infeliz madre!
Pero en creciendo
Cuanto más le van dando
Más va queriendo.¹

Love is a child
Which satisfies
Itself with eating
Very little when born.
Oh! my unhappy mother!
But in growing
The more you give it
The more it wants.

The pericón is the national dance of the Argentine. It is more intricate than the dances already discussed. Six or eight couples are required, and there are five formations which are called off by the director of the dance. Besides being a great favorite in the provinces, this dance is familiar to the cities, being seen in the theatre, municipal, national

1. Garzón: op. cit., p. 224.

and school programs on fiesta days. Between movements of the dance, the gentlemen take turns at putting questions to their ladies to which they must respond in verse. These verses may be original, or not, and in any rhyme scheme. They are not called by the name of the dance as in the case of the cielito.

The vidalita is said to be of indigenous origin and a part of a religious festival.¹ It has a chorus and is sung to the accompaniment of the guitar. An example is:

Nubesita blanca
!Vidality!

Little white cloud
!Vidality!

Que crusás el sielo,
Dime si en los montes
!Vidality!

Which crosses the sky,
Tell me if in the hills
!Vidality!

Has visto a mi dueño;
Dime si en los montes
!Vidality!²

Have you seen my love;
Tell me if in the hills
!Vidality!

The triste is a name given to any song which is sad, and it is generally a love song because of its melancholy character.³

A term which needs explanation at this point, though it does not refer to either the dance or a particular type of song, is the contrapunto. This is a singing competition between the payadores, in which they improvise the verses as they sing. This was a favorite amusement of the gauchos in the last

1. Sarmiento: op. cit., p. 47.

2. Leguizamón: op. cit., pp. 131, 132. Have not been successful in finding a translation for vidality.

3. Garzón: op. cit., p. 484.

century. It was in a contraunto with the devil himself, in which Santos Vega was vanquished.

Commentators are not agreed in their definition of the gauchesque literature. The question involved is: shall a given work be classed as gauchesque because it employs the dialect, though it may not be literature in the true sense of the word; shall another be excluded because it does not use the dialect, yet may have the gaucho as its theme. The logical answer is that in as much as the writer truly interprets the spirit of the gaucho and his environment, though he may or may not employ the dialect as an aid to this, he may be classed as gauchesque. With this interpretation of the term as a criterion, the list of gauchesque works included in this study may be more inclusive than others.

Immediately following the epic and lyric compositions of the old payadores, and simultaneous with the popular song and dance, there sprang up in the Argentine a class of literature which found its counterpart in every republic in South America. It was the epic, in which the tyranny of the dictator and the glory of revolution was the inspiration of the poet. Henry A. Holmes includes this class in his study of the gaucho literature, since the innumerable lyrics which acquired epic character are so redolent of the air breathed in the Martín Fierro of José Hernández.¹ The Cancionero popular²

1. Holmes: op. cit., p. 26.

2. Zeballos: op. cit., pp. 9, 45.

gives an excellent selection of the epic poems of Pedro de Oliver and Pantaleón Rivarola and of other poets, which may be studied for the sentiments they expressed regarding the revolution and other national events. As they do not treat of the gaucho, except as the gaucho was a revolutionist, nor use the dialect, they have no place in the study of the artistic gaucho literature.

There is division of opinion as to who is the first representative of this school. Ricardo Rojas suggests that the first poetry which had the gaucho as its subject was: Canta un guaso...los triunfos de...Ceballos probably written by Juan Baltazar Maziel (1727-1788) about 1778.¹ Quesada, who includes among the writers of the gauchesque poems only those who use the gaucho dialect artistically, cites a poem, though not in dialect, as probably the first known poetic treatment of the gaucho.² It is a Cuento al caso by Fray Cayetano José Rodríguez and was circulated (probably on loose sheets) around 1811. Fray Rodríguez was the author of many songs and patriotic poems, and in 1813, in company with Vicente López, was asked to present a national anthem to the revolutionary assembly.³ When 'López' poem was read to the assembly, Rodríguez was so charmed with the work of his friend that he refused to present his own. It is thought that his Himno de la patria which appeared later

2. Quesada: op. cit., p. 17.

3. Zeballos: op. cit., p. 128.

1. Holmes: op. cit., p. 29.

in a collection of patriotic songs was the one he had planned to submit.¹

In the Cuento al Caso the poet directs his verses to a friend Arquinto. He tells him of a certain noble gaucho who was even more arrogant than the hero of the Mancha. This gaucho met an enemy, killed him, then laughed at his work. The opening lines describe the gaucho.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Sabe, si no lo sabes, | Be it known, if you don't know it, |
| Oh mi querido Arquinto, | Oh my dear Arquinto, |
| Que cierto noble <u>huaso</u> | That a certain noble gaucho |
| De a aquellos que el destino | Of those whom destiny |
| El suelo Tucumano | Gave the land of Tucumán |
| Le dió por domicilio... | As a dwelling place. |
| Sin otro ajuar ni adorno | With no possession or decoration |
| Que un bozal repulido, | Other than a fine bridle, |
| Un par de <u>guardamontes</u> , | A pair of leggings, |
| Unos bastos estribos, | Some rude stirrups, |
| Una usada carona, | A used saddle blanket, |
| Y un recado mezquino... ² | And a miserable saddle. |

Bartolomé Hidalgo, for his use of the gaucho dialect in his dialogues, is proclaimed by most critics as the originator of the true gaucho poetry. Perhaps the dialogues of Juan

1. Zeballos: op. cit., p. 150.

2. Idem.: p. 125.

Gualberto Godoy were known in the province of Cuyo at an earlier date than were those of Hidalgo in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, but this is not certain. At least the poems of Godoy, if they came first, were not the sources of the later great gaucho writers, Ascasubi, Del Campo and Hernández. Even Velloso who names Godoy as the originator of the genre admits that none of his poems have eclipsed the fame of Bartolomé Hidalgo.¹

Little is known of Hidalgo's youth, except that he was of a poor family, and not a gaucho. He said of himself in a letter in 1819: "I am of a poor but honorable family; I am a man of possessions and that is my only inheritance."² He was born at Montevideo August 24, 1787, and died in Buenos Aires. The date and circumstances of his death are disputed.

He was known as the Barber of Montevideo because he served in that capacity in that city. In 1811 he was a volunteer among the Uruguayan troops at Mercedes, Uruguay, fighting against the Portuguese. In 1812 he was the commissioner of war of the revolutionary army, and in 1814 he was assistant to the

1. Velloso, Enrique García: Historia de la literatura Argentina, Buenos Aires 1914, pp. 388-389.

Velloso insists that Godoy is the originator of the gaucho verse. As none of his poems are available for study, Godoy has not been included in the list of gaucho writers. Velloso takes his information from critical notes on the poet published by Domingo Faustine Sarmiento (hijo) published in 1865. Godoy was born July 12, 1798, and died May 16, 1864. He was noted for his fine penmanship. From 1818 his dialogues were familiar in Cuyo. His works are: El verdadero amigo del país; a dialogue Corro; satires published in El Eco de los Andes (1824); and in El Huracán, Las Llanuras de mi patria and El Ciprés published in the Correo del Domingo.

2. Zeballos: ubi supra: p. 238.

treasurer of the customs house in Buenos Aires. The first publication of his work was by Ignacio Nuñez in his Lira Argentina (1824).¹ Most of his poems circulated among the people on loose sheets and the dialogues were acted in play-houses in Buenos Aires and Montivideo.² He wrote some patriotic cielitos, but the bulk of his work was in dialogue form, didactic in that the propaganda in behalf of the gaucho was urged a little too insistently, but original in portraying the life of the gaucho and using his speech.

Zeballos says of his language: "The Spanish words and rural conversations of the poetry of Hidalgo are not gauchesque, but are archaic,...he has not created the gaucho muse properly speaking...but in my judgment he is the founder of popular Argentine poetry."³ It is quite true that the language is archaic but this makes it none the less gauchesque, since that is the true language of the gaucho, as is evident by the most superficial study of the poems in comparison with the language that the gauchos speak today. On the other hand, Menéndez y Pelayo, though admitting no poetic end in the poems, says that one cannot deny that in them are found the germ of the peculiar gauchesque literature.⁴

1. Menéndez y Pelayo: Antalogía, op. cit., p cxcvi.

2. Ibid.

3. Zeballos: op. cit., p. 242.

4. Menéndez y Pelayo: ubi supra.

The titles of the dialogues are: Diálogo patriótico interesante entre Jacinto Chano, capataz de una estancia en las islas del Tordillo, y el gaucho de la guardia del Monte;¹ Nuevo diálogo...entre Ramón Contreras...y Chano, capataz de una estancia en las islas del Tordillo;² Relación que hace el gaucho Ramón Contreras a Jacinto Chano, de todo lo que vió en las fiestas mayas en Buenos Aires (1822).³ The first two dialogues are complaints against the poverty of the gaucho, against his compulsory military service and the uselessness of revolutions which use up money and accomplish nothing. Yet through them both is a strain of resentment against Spain and Ferdinand who seems to be responsible for their troubles. In the beginning of both dialogues the friends take the cimarón (a bitter tea sucked through a tube) and interrupt their conversation to remark on the tea or to take more. This is a realistic touch employed by all succeeding gaucho writers. In the first Chano says that he has served ten years to remove the chains of Ferdinand from his country and wonders what pay he gets for it. He philosophizes on equality in this way:

1. Zeballos: op. cit., p. 245.

2. Idem., p. 251.

3. Menéndez y Pelayo: Antalogía, op. cit., p. 425.

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Porque naides sobre naides | For no one is superior |
| Ha de ser más superior... | To another,... |
| La ley es una no más; | The law is one only, |
| Y ella da su protección | And it gives protection |
| A todo el que la respeta... | To all who respect it... |
| Para ella es lo mismo el | For it, |
| poncho | The poncho, the dress coat or |
| Que casaca y pantalón - | The pantaloons are the same - |

Contreras

Pues siempre oí decir
Que ante la ley era yó
Igual a todos los hombres.¹

Contreras

For I always heard it said
That I was equal to any man
before the law.

In the second dialogue the propaganda is even more obtrusive than in the first. Chano considers Ferdinand so stupid that he is sure that he couldn't even whistle. The gauchos again lament the perpetual war and praise San Martín who is driving the Spaniards out of Lima.

The third dialogue is of an entirely different character. It is free from political allusions, and shows the care-free life of the gaucho and his complete abandonment to the pleasures of a fiesta. Contreras has been to the May celebrations in honor of the first assembly (1810) held in Buenos Aires in 1822. He recounts his experiences to his friend Chano who had been unable to attend because of a bullet wound received in a horse trading deal. This dialogue is prophetic of

1. Zeballos: op. cit., p. 247.

the Fausto of Del Campo. Hidalgo might well have been a gaucho in view of this intimate knowledge of the details of gaucho life.

Imitation of Hidalgo was not immediate, for Romanticism introduced into the Argentine in 1830 by Esteban Echeverría, intervened to centre the attention of the young liberals on another type of literature. Echeverría was born in Buenos Aires in 1805 and died in Montevideo in 1851,¹ one year too early to see the fall of the tyrant against whom he had been so outspoken. When twenty he went to Europe and there became acquainted with the works of Chateaubriand, with Goethe and Schiller in translations and Shakespeare and Byron in the original. He returned to Buenos Aires in 1830, enthusiastic over European liberalism and full of desires to intervene in the public life of his own country, only to find it in the grip of Rosas. Echeverría joined the association of Mayo, a secret society of students opposed to Rosas and as a result of this had to flee to Montevideo in 1841 where he stayed until his death. His first publication, Elvira o la novia del Plata, which presented Romanticism formally to the Argentine, was published the same year as Rivas' El Moro Expósito (1832). Menéndez y Pelayo says that the poem has little value for it is rarely poetic, and is not even valuable for its local color; Elvira might well have been the bride of any country.² Although this poem was received with little enthusiasm, the Cautiva, his next

1. Menéndez y Pelayo: Antalogía, p. clxiv.

2. Idem., p. clxvii.

attempt, published in an edition of Rimas (1837) brought the poet into recognition and fame.¹ Five hundred copies of this edition were sold in Cadiz, and in 1861 the poem was translated into German by Guillermo Walter.²

La Gaitiva is written in classical Spanish, with no single example of the gaucho dialect. The first nine parts of the poem deal with the romantic experiences of María and her husband Brián on the desert, and the last is an epilogue which praises the heroism of María. The chief value of the poem is in its realistic descriptions of the pampa and of the cruelties of the Indians to their captives. The story in brief is this. The Indians celebrate the successes of the day by drinking and dancing around the camp fire, and killing and torturing their prisoners. When they are too drunk to know what is happening, María stabs her captor, releases her husband Brián and flees with him into the desert. They hide by day in the pajonal (oasis of the pampa) planning to continue their journey the next day, but Brián is too weak from his wounds to go on. María watches by him until he dies, then desiring life only for her son's sake, of whom she knows nothing, she starts out to seek civilization. After days of weary traveling with bleeding feet, she meets some soldiers, remnants of her husband's forces, who tell her that her son has been killed. She falls dead at their feet. The author, like all the romanti-

1. Idem: p. 175

2. Idem: p. clxxii.

cists, shows the force of destiny.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| El destino de tu vida | The destiny of your life |
| Fué amar, amor tu delirio, | Was love, love was your delirium, |
| Amor causó tu martirio, | Love caused your martyrdom, |
| Te dió sobrehumano sér; ¹ | Gave you superhuman characteristics; |

Menéndez y Pelayo says of Echeverría "If Chateaubriand were less visible in his works, and María and Brián were more real, the Cautiva would be one of the finest things in American literature."²

Echeverría inspired two poets who are of interest in the study of the gauchesque poetry: Juan María Gutiérrez and Bartolomé Mitre. The first (1809-1878) in addition to his critical works which made him the most famous Argentine critic of the XIX century,³ published an epic Los Amores del Payador⁴ (1838) the year after the publication of La Cautiva, then in 1843 another short poem A mi caballo.⁵ The verses come from a homesick heart in banishment. The poet asks his horse whether he has cried for him in his owner's absence when others cared

1. Idem: p. 236.

2. Idem: p. clxxlv.

3. Velloso: op. cit., p. 262.

4. Coester, Alfred: The literary history of Spanish America, New York 1916, p. 126.

5. Menéndez y Pelayo: Antalogía, p. 257.

for him, or if he remembers the times he was present at his owner's love making by the river. The opening verse shows the rider's love for his horse:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Rey de los llanos de la | King of the plains of my |
| patria mía, | native land, |
| Mi tostado alazán! Quién me | My tanned sorrel! Who would |
| volviera | return to me |
| Tu fiel y generosa compañía | Your faithful and noble |
| | presence |
| Y tu mirada inteligente y | And your intelligent and |
| fiera! | wild look! |

Bartolomé Mitre (1821-1906), general, governor of the province of Buenos Aires, president and historian of the lives of General Belgrano and San Martín, was also famous in his youth as the writer of verses. In 1844 he edited a book, Rimas,¹ which contains a section called Harmonías de la pampa. They are Echeverría in their treatment of the pampa and national honor. The most famous is the Santos Vega, which will be discussed later under the section The legend of Santos Vega. (See below, page 44.)

Hilario Ascasubi (1807-1875)² chronologically follows

1. Mitre, Bartolomé: Rimas, Buenos Aires 1916.

The poems included in the Harmonías de la pampa are: A un Ombú (p. 123); A Santos Vega (p. 127); El pato (p. 133); El Caballero del Gaucho (p. 145).

2. Ascasubi, Hilario: Santos Vega, Buenos Aires 1919

Mitre in the production of gaucho literature. The influence of Mitre is shown in his use of the legend of Santos Vega, and that of Echeverría in the choice of a romantic subject and technique. The use of the gaucho dialect in his three works and the dialogue form employed in Aniceto el gallo and Paulino Lucero are imitations of Hidalgo. (See below, page 45, for his life and importance.)

The names of Estanislao del Campo, José Hernández and Hilario Ascasubi form a trio of gaucho writers of the first rank. None of them was original in the use of the gaucho as the protagonist or the use of the dialect, for Hidalgo inspired them all. None of them was a gaucho but in spite of that they have been able to speak his language and make the reader sense the vastness of the pampa, and feel with the gaucho his joy and sorrow. They have been successful in writing verse which is really poetic at times and in producing authentic contemporaneous accounts of the periods of which they write.

Estanislao del Campo was born in 1834 in Buenos Aires and died there in 1884. He was a writer and politician.¹ The Fausto² published first in the Correo del Domingo (1868), is his only notable work. It is a definite imitation of the Santos Vega of Ascasubi, parts of which were known as early as 1850, though the complete work was not published until 1872. The meeting of the two gaucho friends at the beginning of the

1. Martín Fierro: op. cit.

2. Del Campo, Estanislao: Fausto, Buenos Aires 1920.

poem, the description of their horses, their drinking of mate, the swearing, the comparisons made by the gaucho of human life to animal life are like the Santos Vega. However the theme of the Fausto is like that of the third dialogue of Hidalgo in which Contreras recounts his experiences in Buenos Aires at the May fiestas. In the poem of Del Campo the gaucho Anastasio, El Pollo, has been to Buenos Aires trying to collect money from his wool sales. One evening he sees the people gathered like cattle in front of the Colón theater and he joins them to see the presentation of the opera Faust. He recounts his impressions of the opera in as many parts as there are acts in the play, and so realistically that upon hearing of the devil and his part in it, Don Laguna has to cross himself. The result is a very charming and artistic bit of work.

One feels however that the author has done a clever thing in giving the public something to laugh over, rather than portrayed the real feelings of the gaucho under the circumstances that he describes. He makes fun of the gaucho by having him misinterpret the play. Menéndez y Pelayo says that it is good, wholesome, legitimate poetry.¹ He quotes verses giving the gaucho's impressions of the sea, something no gaucho could ever have felt, much less described. In spite of these evidences of artificiality there are few works which have more perfect gauchesque form or a more poetic vein.²

1. Menéndez y Pelayo: Historia, p. 472.

2. Quesada: op. cit., p. 27.

Verses descriptive of the horses of Santos Vega and Laguna show similarity:

Santos Vega

El cual iba pelo a pelo,
 en un potrillo bragao
flete lindo como un dao
 que apenas pisaba el suelo
 de livianito y delgao.¹

(Referring to Vega)

Who went on the same horse,
 a buck-skin colt
 swift and fine as a dice
 barely touched the ground
 it was so light and graceful.

Fausto

En un ouero rosao,
 Flete nuevo y parejito
 Caiba al bajo, al trocicito
 Como creo que ne hay otro
 Capaz de llevar un potro.
 A sofrenarlo en la luna.²

Fausto

On a spotted pink horse
 young, swift and well formed,
 As I believe there is no
 other who could hold him
 in the moon.

The following are only a few of the many examples found in both poems, where the storyteller makes homely reference to the life around him.

Vega says: "Le haré una comparación..." he then compares his friend to a tame horse which will jump when it is tickled in the flank,³ and again the cousin of Estrella says: "No sabes que el dinero anda a caballo?"⁴ (don't you know that

1. Ascasubi: op. cit., p. 30.

2. Del Campo: op. cit., p. 7.

3. Ascasubi: op. cit., p. 79.

4. Idem., p. 276.

money goes on horse back?)

Laguna in Fausto says you might compare the vanishing stars to a horse who is shedding his hair,¹ and the broken landscape to a swift and swollen stream,² and Aniceto compares his tale to a swift horse which is not tired.³

The third of the trio of gaucho writers, José Hernández, is the most famous, for in his Martín Fierro he has created a character which has all of the reality of the gauchos of Ascasubi, the wit and philosophy of the Fausto, and has in addition told the experiences of his gaucho with a pathos which moves the reader as no other gaucho poems have done. No other poem can compare to the Martín Fierro in popularity. Holmes who has made a most careful study of Hernández' poem, giving all credit due to its predecessors, has this to say of it:⁴

"Since its publication in 1872 Martín Fierro has held the centre of the stage. After its appearance no other lyric-epic poet has arisen to give us in gaucho speech the gaucho's story. ...The demand for the poem has never ceased. From 1872 to 1875 eight editions appeared in Buenos Aires and a ninth in Rosario. The edition of 1894 estimates a sale of 64,000 copies up to that date. In 1917 Rojas gives a figure of 100,000 copies.⁵

In spite of evident faults (referring to the vuelta which is

1. Del Campo: op. cit., p. 21.

2. Idem., p. 14.

3. Idem., p. 17.

4. Holmes: op. cit., p. 55.

5. Idem., p. 75.

not up to the first part) it is a masterly exposition of gaucho life."

Hernández was born near Buenos Aires November 10, 1834, the son of an old and rich family.¹ He died on October 10, 1894, in Belgrano, a fashionable section of Buenos Aires. Little is known of his education. In his youth he was sent south to estancias for his health, where he learned the ways of the Indians and the gauchos about whom he was to write later. His political and literary life fell in the period of peace in the Argentine. He was politically opposed to both Mitre and Sarmiento and even assisted in some minor gaucho uprisings led by López Jordán (1870-1872). When these failed, he was exiled for a short period. He returned in 1874 and became a prominent political figure. He held directorships in the national bank of Montgages and in the council of Education. In the later sixties he was editing in Buenos Aires the Revista del Río de la Plata. He wrote some short poems contained in the 1894 edition of Martín Fierro which have no literary value. They are: El viejo y la niña, Los dos besos, El carpintero and Cantares.

Holmes suggests that the origin of Martín Fierro is in the author's resentment against the practices oppressive to the gaucho, which led him to fight with them; hence the realism in the poem. It was the lust of battle, not the complacent smirk of the pamphleteer or the mere rhymers, that shone in the eyes of the poet.²

1. Idem., p. 67.

2. Idem., p. 78.

The following verses are from the beginning of Martín Fierro in which the payador with no introduction from the author begins his song:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Aquí me pongo a cantar, | Here I begin to sing |
| Al compás de la viguela, | To the time of the guitar, |
| Que el hombre que le desvela | For the man who is beset |
| Una pena estrordinaria, | By extraordinary anguish |
| Como la ave solitaria | Like the lonely bird, |
| Con el cantar se consuela... | Comforts himself with song. |
| Cantando me he de morir, | Singing I shall die, |
| Cantando me han de enterrar, | Singing I shall be buried, |
| Cantando he de llegar | And singing I shall arrive |
| Al pie de Eterno Padre. ¹ | At the feet of the eternal father. |

Martín Fierro recalls in poetic contrast the days when he had a wife and children, did his day's work with the herds and returned to a peaceful sleep at night. Then the army officers come to draft him into military service which takes him far from his home. After two years he deserts and returns to his own land to find that his wife has gone off with another man and the children have disappeared. He then determines to be a matrero (killer). At a country dance he kills a negro and his life of crime begins. He later meets with his friend Cruz, a police sargent, who saves him from his own officials, and

1. Hernández: op. cit., pp. 41-42.

they flee together to find refuge with the Indians. They are received suspiciously by the Indians, but allowed to remain with them. The small pox attacks the camp, and the gaucho and his friend are about to leave when they learn that the Indian who had saved them is ill; they remain to help him. Cruz becomes sick with the disease and dies, and Martín buries him and forsakes the camp. He rescues a white captive woman who was being beaten by an Indian. He finds two of his sons, who sing their experiences to him. A third singer called Picardía, who turns out to be one of his sons, continues the tales. Then the brother of the man whom Martín had killed arrives to challenge him to a contrapunto. (See above, page 21.) Trouble is avoided by the sons' tactfully changing the subject. Martín gives them all advice and they separate to seek their fortunes in different directions.

The poem is a tale of troubles, yet through it all the gaucho bears them philosophically and hopes for better times.

With the work of Rafael Obligado the gaucho poetry departs from the epic, to return to the lyric. Obligado's contribution to the chain of gaucho literature is his Cantos Vega, the most perfect poetical interpretation of that character. He was born January 2, 1852, in Buenos Aires of a distinguished family and died in Mendoza March 8, 1920. His Poesías¹ appeared first in 1885. He lived most of his life on the banks of the Paraná which evidently gave him his nature inspiration. He was

1 Obligado, Rafael: Poesías, Buenos Aires 1921.

interested in the classics. He was one of several who founded the faculty of Filosofía y Letras (University of Buenos Aires) and was a corresponding member of the Academia española. (See below, page 47, for estimate of his Santos Vega)

The next link in the gaucho literature is the novel, the logical development from verse which has exhausted itself and has found no new singers to refresh it. Eduardo Gutiérrez (1853-1890)¹ was the creator of the gaucho novel in his Juan Moreira (1881). It was written for a newspaper public, and the paintings of the early gaucho writers are pale in comparison with the bold strokes of its author. He took his character from a real Moreira bandit famous in the sixties, a Jesse James who needed little elaboration to make him pleasing to a public eager for thrills. Gutiérrez was a careless journalist and not an artist.² He had his followers, one of the most noted an Uruguayan realist, Javier de Viana.³

To Quesada, after the fall of Rosas (1852) and the true national organization of the republic, creolism or gauchism assumed a new aspect, for with the increase of immigration the gaucho language no longer was predominant.⁴ Between 1857 and 1895 1,200,000 Italians, 200,000 French, 40,000 English, and 30,000 Germans entered the Argentine and mingled their words with the pure Spanish as well as with the gaucho speech. On the

1. Holmes: op. cit., p. 62.

2. Idem., p. 64.

3. Viana, Javier de: Gaucha, Montevideo 1913, Ranchos, Buenos Aires 1920; Paisanas, Buenos Aires 1920.

4. Quesada: op. cit., pp. 45-50.

stage as well as in literature there appeared a language called Cocoliche,¹ a mixture of Italianisms and gauchisms which came to replace the old gaucho dialect. The term is derived from the character Cocoliche in the dramatization of Juan Moreira. The exaggerated tales of Gutiérrez plus the increase of immigration are the cause of the degeneration of the gaucho literature. (See below, page 48, for a further study of the Santos Vega of Gutiérrez.)

The history of the popular theatre in the Argentine is the history of the gaucho drama; it is an outgrowth of the novel. The creators of the creole (gaucho) drama are the members of the Podestá family, especially José and Jeronimo.² It began in this way. In June 1884, an equestrian company under the direction of two north Americans, the Carlos brothers, was acting in the Argentine Politeama in Buenos Aires. The novelist Gutiérrez suggested to the Carlos' that they localize the pantomime which followed the performance. They accepted the idea, and chose the story of Juan Moreira making José Podestá the protagonist. The success of the performance was enormous. It was presented twelve times before the company moved to Rio de Janeiro. José Podestá organized a company with his brother and another relative named Scotti and off and on during the year gave this performance of Juan Moreira. Early in 1886 some dialogue was added, then in April of the same year the play with complete dialogue arranged by Podestá from the novel

1. Idem: p. 53

2. Lehmann-Witche: op. cit., pp. 216, 217, 218.

was shown first in Chivelcoy. This was the birth of the national Argentine drama.

In March and April 1890 the brothers added the play Martín Fierro (arranged by Elías Regules) and Juan Cuello (arranged by Luis Mejías) to their repertoire.

In 1892 they showed Julián Jiménez by Abdón Aróztegui and El Entenao by Dr. Regules.

In 1892 in the Politeama of Montevideo they presented Juan Soldado of Orosmán Moratorio.

In 1894, Cobarde y Tribulaciones de un Criollo by Pérez Petit and Santos Vega arranged by Juan Carlos Nosiglia.

In 1896 came Calandria by Martiniano Leguizamón.

In 1897 the Tranquera of Agustín Fontenella.

This completes the list of early productions of the Podestá company. (For other arrangements of Santos Vega see below, page 49.)

The play Calandria of Leguizamón has a peculiar place in the history of the national drama, for it is an attempt to repudiate the harmful effects of the exaggerations of the Juan Moreira type of play. It is a recreation of the idealistic conception of Santos Vega or Martín Fierro. The following account from the Nación May 24, 1896, written by Luis Berisso, only one of many such accounts published in the 1898 edition of the play, shows appreciation of this effort.¹ "Last night, ...after having had to endure so many hair-raising things, we have finally had the good luck to hear something which is a

1. Leguizamón: op. cit., p. 16

vivid picture taken from life, though it is not properly a drama...; though it is fundamentally gaucho it is far removed from the brutal and bloody types of Juan Cuello and Juan Moreira."

The gaucho Calandria is a payador, a lover of freedom, a carefree wanderer of the pampa, who did not hate the law except as it forced him into military service, nor did he kill regardless of consequences. For love of his china, the beauty of the country-side, he threw away his knife as a symbol of his old wild days and became a decent citizen.

IV. The Legend of Santos Vega.

Before introducing the Santos Vega of Hilario Ascasubi as an object of special study, it would be well to discuss the legend of Santos Vega and place Ascasubi's poetic narrative in the chain of literature which proceeds from the tales concerning him. Robert Lehmann-Nitche in his thorough study of the prose and poetic treatment of this legend, and in his investigations of the authenticity of the character, has left little to be said on the subject.¹ He has shown that the character of Santos Vega, whether he be real or fictitious, is one of the richest sources of the popular Argentine poetic muse. Bunge accounts for the popularity of the legendary hero by the fact that he has become the purest and most elevated personification of the gaucho.² Just as the Cid became the hero of the Spanish people, so has Santos Vega come to be the ideal of the Argentines.

Nitche's conclusions regarding the legend are, that it is of medieval Castillian origin, as proved by a few fragments of ballads conserved in colonial territory,³ and that the name of a real Argentine José Santos Vega has been substituted for the protagonist of the old romance.⁴ There are few facts

1. Lehmann-Nitche: op. cit.

2. Hernández: op. cit., p. 54.

3. Lehmann-Nitche: op. cit., p. 2.

4. Idem: p. 429.

concerning Santos Vega, but the following information about him has the appearance of veracity. According to current opinion in Buenos Aires, in the first quarter of the XIX century, there existed a payador, José Santos Vega. He once competed in a contrapunto for two or three nights consecutively with an African singer. This competition took place in the barrio del pino which is today on Montevideo street in Buenos Aires between Sarmiento and Corrientes streets.¹ La Prensa, Buenos Aires, on July 28, 1885, printed an article by P. Rodríguez who recounts the story of an old man who saw José Santos Vega the payador die in a kitchen on the estancia of Saenz Valiente in the district of Tuyú.² A grave exists in Tuyú which is said to be that of Santos Vega.

The legend has found expression in three fields: that of poetry, of the novel, and of the drama, but mainly in poetry. The first use of the legend was made by Bartolomé Mitre in his poem A Santos Vega, one of a collection of Harmonías de la pampa published in his Rimas (1838).³ He wrote it when only sixteen years as a supreme expression of his love of nature and liberty, and his hatred of tyranny. For this he was the idol of the youth of his day.⁴ In an explanatory note to his poem, Mitre says that Santos Vega died of grief, and according to popular

1. Idem: p. 402.

2. Idem: pp. 412, 413.

3. Mitre: op. cit., pp. 127-133.

4. Idem: introduction, p. vii.

tradition was vanquished by an unknown youth in a song which the gauchos call contrapunto. The unknown singer was supposed to have been the devil himself, for he alone could have won over Santos Vega. The poem is written in seventeen verses. Mitre is decidedly outspoken against the use of the dialect. In his note to Santos Vega he says "To make the gaucho speak the poets have employed all of the gaucho expressions; they are very energetic, picturesque and charming, but they do not constitute what may properly be called poetry."¹ The poet suggests in his words directed to Santos Vega, that it were better to have one's songs sung by gauchos and Indians, and well written in popular memory, than to have them carved in stone. He makes no mention of the youth or loves of Vega, but carries him to his grave on his favorite horse midst his sorrowing admirers. The grief of the friends, and the stateliness of the procession is reminiscent of the death of the Cid. Then in accordance with the legend, the poet brings back his spirit to kindle a fire under the ombú tree and stroke the strings of the guitar which is hung in the tree, as had the incomparable payador when alive.

The next treatment of this subject was by Ascasubi in his book entitled Santos Vega, published in its complete form of 13,000 verses in 1872. He says that he began to write this story as early as 1850.² This poetic narrative does not primarily concern the life of Santos Vega; it is rather the

1. Idem: note, p. 361.

2. Ascasubi: op. cit., p. 25.

tale told by Vega of the Mellizos de la Flor to the purely fictitious characters Juana Patrona and Rufo Tolosa. Although Vega serves only as a romantic background to the thoroughly romantic tale that he tells, Ascasubi faithfully preserves in him the spirit of the legendary payador. Ascasubi, in variance with his predecessor Mitre, thinks that the character is only a myth, for in his words to the reader in the 1872 edition he says: "The plot of the Mellizos de la Flor is a favorite theme of the Argentine gaucho. It is the story of a bandit who was capable of committing any crime, and who gave great trouble to the law. By presenting his deeds and criminal life through the medium of Santos Vega, I have also conserved a myth of the country people.¹ Ascasubi's interpretation of Santos Vega ranks high in the estimation of Nitché, for he says of him: "In comparison with Ascasubi, there is little to be said of any writer who has mentioned our hero."²

It was the work of Rafael Obligado to popularize the legendary character in 1877 in his poem Santos Vega,³ "a jewel worthy of figuring in the best South American literature."⁴ He introduces many new elements in his interpretation of the character. The parts of the poem are: Alma del Payador, La prenda del payador, El himno del payador and La muerte del payador.

1. Idem: p. 26.

2. Lehmann-Nitché: op. cit., p. 29.

3. Obligado: op. cit., p. 211.

4. Lehmann-Nitché: op. cit., p. 29.

The first verses have been set to music and popularized by Leopoldo Corretjer. In the third episode, the poet by comparison to the heroism of the past appeals to the youth of the present. The following example gives an idea of the spirit of the poem:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| !Hijos del llano y la sierra, | Sons of the plain and hill, |
| !pueblo Argentino! ?Qué | Argentines, what shall we do? |
| haremos? | |
| ?Menos valientes serenos | Shall we be less brave |
| que los que libres se aclaman? | Than those who proclaim |
| | liberty? |
| !De Buenos Aires nos llaman, | They call us from Buenos |
| | Aires, |
| A Buenos Aires volemos! ¹ | To Buenos Aires let us fly. |

The highly idealized type of pavador of Ascasubi and Mitre was not to last, for in the hands of the novelist Eduardo Gutiérrez he became the bandit and anarchist. The thirty novels of Gutiérrez were and still are popular. Their melodramatic and exaggerated character made an appeal to the common people and the stories of Juan Moreira, Juan Cuello and Santos Vega were household words. Their influence was so great that all gauchesque poems and novels which followed took on the gaucho malo character. The Santos Vega of Gutiérrez like his other novels has a documental value for the period treated, upon removal of the exaggerated descriptions.² It appeared first in

1. Obligado: op. cit., p. 225.

2. Lehmann-Nitche: op. cit., p. 132.

the daily La patria Argentina in the numbers beginning November 22, 1880, and continuing until April 30, 1881.¹ In a prologue the author tells what he considers is the true story of Santos Vega. It is not sure just how much of this may be considered as authentic and how much is his own invention.² The use of the legendary character in a novel enabled the author to fashion an elaborate story around him. He gave Vega a childhood, a rich father and a sick mother. He gave him an early love affair with María, and a later one with Dolores a married woman. He became a fugitive from justice and the gaucho malo when he killed the father of María. On his flights he would stop at friendly estancias or wine shops and sing his verses which brought him fame. Finally the author gave him a friend, Carmona. It was to the grave of this loved one that Vega went to fast, and it was there that he became so weak that he was unable to win the Contrapunto with the devil.³

There have been eight versifications of this novel, and fourteen poems dealing with important incidents of Vega's life,⁴ while over two dozen treat of some phase of it wherein the name of the payador may or may not be mentioned.

The theme of Santos Vega was used three times in the drama.⁵ There are two dramatizations of the novel; the first

1. Lehmann-Nitche; op. cit., p. 132.

2. Idem: pp. 138-156.

3. Idem: p. 160.

4. Idem: p. 177.

5. Idem: p. 216.

was arranged by Juan Carlos Nosiglia in 1894,¹ and the second by Domingo Spíndola in 1903-4.² The third is a poetic version of the novel in dramatic form by Luis Bayón Herrera produced by the company of Pablo Podestá June 5, 1913.³

In 1917 when Lehmann-Nitche's work went to print, a film version of the legend was being arranged by Carlos De Paoli.⁴ Both clubs and race horses have been named for the legendary character, and writers have employed the name as a nom de plume.

1. Idem: p. 219.

2. Idem: p. 228.

3. Idem: p. 237.

4. Idem: p. 261.

V. Life and Works of Hilario Ascasubi.

Hilario Ascasubi, poet, journalist, lieutenant colonel and the Beranger of the Río de la Plata, was born at Fraile Muerto in the province of Córdoba (republic of Argentina) January 14, 1807.¹ His first bed was under the wagon which was taking his parents to Buenos Aires where his mother sought refuge from a severe storm. The circumstances of his birth were prophetic of the tempestuous life the poet was to lead, for it covered the most turbulent years of Argentine history. Argentina made her first break with Spain when Ascasubi was only three, and signed the declaration of independence when he was nine. The period of the dictatorship fell in his most active years and it was not until the later years of the poet's life that comparative peace came to the republic.

Ascasubi spent his early years calmly enough in the schools of Buenos Aires, but he was absorbing the revolutionary ideas which dominated the city at that time. His family had no great fortune and he was forced to work as a type setter. When only twelve he started on a journey which was to take him to North America and the French Guianas. Later he was to ride on the first Argentine merchant ship the Rosa Argentina to cross the equator. In 1822 he returned to his native land only to leave for Bolivia the same year. In 1825 he came down from

1. Velloso gives Fray Bentos as the birth place of the poet, but since the biographical notes in the 1919 edition of the poem Santos Vega which are copied from the 1872 edition give the town as cited above, the conclusion is that he is wrong.

that country to the province of Salta to join an infantry company which was being formed there under the generalship of José María Paz with the noble objective of freeing the republic of Uruguay from Brazilian dominion. Having taken part in the glorious Argentine victory of Ituzaingo February 20, 1827, Ascasubi returned to Buenos Aires in 1828. Here he aligned himself with the "savage unitarians" called so by the tyrant Rosas since they were opposed to his federalist doctrines. The young enthusiast was so outspoken that he was soon imprisoned in a dark cell where he was left for twenty-three months. He was removed at the end of this time, still a prisoner, to a beautiful home near a bridge called El Cacique, and there it was that he first began to compose his first gaucho verses. Regretting his kindness Rosas ordered one of his governors Tomás Manuel de Anchorena to shoot the patriot, but something which was unusual for those bloody times took place; the governor disobeyed the order, and the poet was allowed to escape. Upon returning from a campaign in which he was occupied at the time of the poet's escape, Rosas ordered him imprisoned again. When Ascasubi was being led to the fortress which was to see the end of his life, he purposely tripped on a wall and fell fifteen metres into an opening from which he was successful in making a second escape. This time he sought refuge in Uruguay with the many Argentine patriots there. There is no exact date of his departure from his native land, but it was probably three years after his arrival, making it in 1831 or 1832. The first dialogue in the Paulino Lucero collection treats of an incident

in Montevideo which took place in 1833 an indication that he was in Montevideo by that date at least.¹

In the years that followed Ascasubi's escape and his return at the fall of Rosas, he was in constant protest against the tyrant; two of his brothers were killed in the same cause. The poet with his personal funds gained in writing, armed a boat to assist Lavalle in the war against the tyrant, and at all times his house and money were at the disposition of his companions in exile.² When Justo José de Urquiza turned against Rosas, Colonel Ascasubi was with him in the battle of Caseros, which freed Buenos Aires and allowed the exiled patriots to return to their beloved shores. Even then the patriotic inclinations of the poet took a militaristic form and he was found writing in favor of the province of Buenos Aires in the separatist cause. In 1861, newspaper articles stated that Hilario Ascasubi was returning from Europe to his native land where it was hoped that he would continue to aid in the behalf of peace for his country. While in Europe he made literary friendships both in France and in Spain. Ascasubi made another journey to France in 1872 from which he returned in 1875, to live a few months. He died November 17 of that same year in his native city.³ There is no mention of a love affair or marriage. He was known as the "Mulato Ascasubi."

1. Ascasubi: Santos Vega, p. 13.

2. Velloso: op. cit., p. 393.

3. Quesada: op. cit., p. 26, note 2.

The poet found self-expression in two different channels: in battle and in poetry. Even his poetry was a weapon of war in his attack upon his enemy, Rosas. The three poets Mitre, Echeverría and Ascasubi were motivated by the same bitter hatred for the tyrant. Ascasubi's production may be roughly divided into three periods: that of his youth; that of his banishment; that of conservatism. Very little work fell in the first, and what there was is no longer in existence. In 1824 he introduced the first printing press in Salta and there published some patriotic poems glorifying the republican victory of Ayacucho.¹ The second period is the most prolific. In it he wrote and published the many cielitos and dialogues of propagandist character which were later collected under the title Las Trovas de Paulino Lucero. The third period includes the propagandist prose and poetry written upon the poet's return to Buenos Aires and directed to the federalists under the title Aniceto el Gallo and the poetic narrative Santos Vega o los Mellizos de La Flor. The first complete edition of the work of Ascasubi was made in Paris (1872) on the poet's second visit to Europe, in three volumes in the reverse order from that in which they were written.

The sub-title of the Trovas de Paulino Lucero is:

"The Gauchos of the Río de la Plata Singing and Fighting against the Tyranny of the Republics of Argentine and Uruguay between 1839 and 1851 Which Refer to all the Episodes of the Nine Years when Montevideo Heroically Resisted and also the Work of the

1. Ascasubi: op. cit., p. 22.

Patriotic Gauchos until They Overcame the Tyrant Rosas and His Satellites."¹ Some of these verses appeared in two volumes in 1853,² but this publication was never given the status of a first edition. The first was the edition of Paris referred to above, and the second was made in Buenos Aires in 1900, in an effort to popularize the work of the poet since the first edition was made unavailable by its high price.

In introductions or notes to most of the verses of Paulino Lucero the date and place of first publication is given. These notes are the source for determining in just what periodicals Ascasubi was publishing his work or in what publications he was personally interested.

The first dialogue in this collection is between Jacinto Amores and Simón Peñalva, both Uruguayan gauchos, in which the former tells his friend about his glorious experience in the three days' fiesta held in Montevideo in July 1833 in honor of the Uruguayan declaration of independence.³ There are no data on the publication of the dialogue, but since the event described comes six years before any other publication in this volume and since the verses are absolutely free from any political allusions, it may be assumed that it was published in some periodical other than that of the poet, and before he had definitely turned to propaganda. It is an evident imita-

1. Ascasubi: Paulino Lucero, Buenos Aires 1900.

2. Ascasubi: Santos Vega, p. 23.

3. Ascasubi: Paulino Lucero, p. 1.

tion of the dialogue of Hidalgo in which Contreras describes the May fiestas in Buenos Aires. Both gauchos who attended the fiestas got gloriously drunk, both describe similar dances, and both the gauchos who listened to the account expressed themselves as desirous of attending the fiestas the following year.

In 1839 there was printed in the fourth number of El gaucho en campaña a short poem of Ascasubi's, El Truquiflor, celebrating a battle between Rosines de Echagüe a follower of Rosas and the Uruguayan gauchos.¹

Up until July 14, 1843,² when the poet created the periodical Jacinto Cielo, there is no indication that the poet used a pseudonym. From that date on, though no more than two numbers of the paper of that name were published in Montevideo, the gaucho Jacinto Cielo created by Ascasubi continued to appear as the author of poems and letters in other periodicals established by the poet.

The name Paulino Lucero does not appear as the pseudonym of the poet until the last half of the collection by that name. It then appears as the name of a publication started by the poet in 1843 called El gaucho Paulino.³ There is no indication as to the life of this publication, but at least there were ten numbers, for in the ninth issue, August 25, 1834, the poet directs verses to his subscribers in which he intimates that if

1. Idem: p. 30.

2. Idem: p. 105.

3. Idem: p. 171.

they do not pay for the tenth issue he will unsaddle his horse and discontinue his publication. In the first number of El gaucho Paulino the name Jacinto Cielo appears as the author of verses, which indicates that with the creation of Paulino the author did not forsake his first character. In November 1846, three years after the origin of the name, Paulino directs verses to the editor of the Comercio del Plata of Montevideo, Dr. Florencio Varela, asking that he publish the dialogue Paulino Lucero.¹ This may indicate that the poet had discontinued his own publication at that time. This dialogue is the story told by the Corrientes gaucho Lucero to his friend Martín Sayago, upon meeting him in the army of Urquiza. Lucero had been fighting in the service of Lavalle when the leader was killed and the troops routed. He had saved the general's body from the barbarity of Rosas' soldiers. Then he had fled to Cuaró where he remained, waiting the opportunity to accomplish his revenge on Rosas. The chance came in the movement directed by Urquiza. (See above, page 16.)

Another event celebrated by Ascasubi is the French and English intervention against the forces of Rosas. The most important of the verses regarding this event is La Encuñetada² published in Montevideo August 18, 1848, which discusses the intervention, by means of the conversation of the three gauchos Olivera, Marcelo and Agapito. The following lines of the author indicate the spirit of the dialogue:

1. Idem: p. 173.

2. Idem: p. 269.

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Van tres gauchos liberales | Three liberal gauchos |
| a quejarse, con razón, | are going to complain, and |
| de una <u>floja</u> y ruin <u>acción</u> | with reason of a weak |
| de dos gobiernos, desleales. | and base action |
| Siendo gauchos, como tales, | of two governments. |
| se explicarán sin rodeos | Being gauchos, such as they are |
| sin que <u>dentre</u> en sus deseos | they will express themselves |
| ni un remoto pensamiento | frankly without it being their |
| de hacer en el fundamento | desire nor remotest thought to |
| agravio a los <u>Uropeos</u> . ¹ | anger the Europeans. |

Other dialogues in the collection are: Los Payadores;² Ramón Contreras a su amigo Salvador Antero;³ Anselmo Morales y Rudesindo Olivera.⁴

Other pseudonyms employed by the poet are: Anastasio el Chileno;⁵ Luciano Callejas;⁶ Juan de Dios Chaná;⁷ Santos Contreras.⁸

The poems in the Paulino Lucero have a vivacious tone which shows that they come as a sincere expression of a liberty-loving heart which was in complete harmony with the gauchos whom it claimed to represent.

Since the collection Aniceto el gallo is not available for study, its contents cannot be adequately discussed. As in-

1. Idem: p. 271.

2. Idem: p. 134.

3. Idem: p. 230.

4. Idem: p. 252.

5. Idem: p. 206.

6. Idem: p. 226.

7. Idem: p. 265.

8. Idem: p. 270.

dedicated in the collection just mentioned, after two issues of the Jacinto Cielo publication it was discontinued to be revived later in the periodical Aniceto el gallo.¹ Velloso describes this collection as prose and verse taken from the periodical of that name published in 1853 in Buenos Aires, in which the incidents relating to the sufferings of the troops of Urquiza are recorded.² Coester adds that these verses are propaganda in favor of unitarianism as opposed to the federalist doctrines of the adherents of Urquiza.³ Evidently Ascasubi used the name Aniceto el Gallo in preference to the names formerly employed when he returned to Buenos Aires, for in 1859 Estanislao del Campo wrote a letter to the poet addressing him as Aniceto and thanking him, as a disciple, for the older poet's praise of the Fausto.⁴

The first volume of the Paris edition of the works of Ascasubi, yet the last to be written, the Santos Vega, belongs to the conservative period of the poet's literary life. In the opening words to the reader he says that he began the story of Los Mellizos in 1850 but that he was unable to finish more than ten chapters of the whole work of sixty-five for publication in 1850, because of the vicissitudes of the times through which he was passing. He says that his favorite type had always been the

1. Idem: p. 105.

2. Velloso: op. cit., p. 394.

3. Coester: op. cit., p. 139.

4. Ascasubi: Santos Vega, p. 19.

gaucho. He says the poem may be called a story or a poem, just as one pleases. He had attempted to show in Santos Vega in addition to the tendencies of the bad gaucho, the good characteristics which in general are common to the gaucho. He publishes his book without pretension, though he loves the verses as though they were his children. He looks upon his patriotic verses as the essence of his youthful aspirations, and hopes that he is not vain in thinking that they were weapons of war against the oppressor; to him in his old age they are a consolation to his saddened spirit, just as are the verses of Santos Vega, for the latter make him re-live his youth as he completes the tale. To some the book will mean the echoes of the songs of the gaucho but to others it will be the violation of literary rules.¹

The contemporaries of Ascasubi were generous in their praise of him. Heraclio C. Fajardo writing March 15, 1862, just before the poet's first return from Europe says: "Everyone of wisdom and ability in these countries have given spontaneous tribute to the poet, which he has preserved in an album, a glorious treasure...; his name and productions have received applause even in Europe, and yet Ascasubi himself does not take seriously the title of poet; he believes himself no more than a rhymer of circumstances which will go with the epoc...; he is modest without affectation His character is the most affable

1. Idem: p. 26.

2. Idem: p. 24.

and in his conversation and verses the joke and the epigram flash forth."¹

In addition to the services which the poet gave to his country as a poet and soldier he aided in the artistic development of Buenos Aires; he personally contributed much of his private fortune to the construction of the Colón theatre. He had a great love for the stranger who came to his shores as well as for the gaucho of the plains.²

Ascasubi gained his fame in his political verses, but he will be remembered by his Santos Vega which, as it is not obscured by political allusions, has a universal appeal.

The Santos Vega has been chosen for special study because it gives a true picture of the gaucho life of the first of the last century. The poet wrote of the period covered between 1778 and 1808, i. e., some years before his own time. This constitutes a real weakness in the work in the eyes of Bunge.³ But the gaucho life only twenty years before the life of the poet could not have differed greatly from the life of his time. The historical incidents, though not essential in the realistic picture, are correct.

Santos Vega has not been chosen because it is the first gaucho work; Hidalgo has that honor. It has not been chosen as the most poetic expression in gaucho literature;

1. Idem: p. 24.

2. Ibid.

3. Hernández: op. cit., p. 23.

Vernández and Obligado are rivals for that honor. It has been chosen because it is the first gaucho poetry to depart from didactic propaganda and branch out into pure epic with a background of customs.

VI. The Story of Santos Vega.

The part that the famous legendary bard plays in the poetic narrative Santos Vega has already been discussed. It has been shown that the old payador serves only as a framework upon which the poet hangs his tale; a bit of folk-lore to attract the attention of the public to his longer poem Los Mellizos de la Flor. From the beginning to the end of the 13,000 verses, one never loses sight of the bard, for he must occasionally fill his pipe, drink his mate and even sleep, before he arrives at the conclusion of his narrative; he interrupts himself to weep over the incidents which he is relating, or to tell a story in a lighter vein to relieve the tension of his listeners. Santos Vega is as realistically drawn as either of the twins of the Flor, or his other characters but the interest is not primarily in his life.

The poetic narrative is divided into sixty-four chapters and an epilogue; totaling three hundred and forty pages. The payador assumes a grave responsibility in attempting to recount clearly the experiences of the twins of the estancia, the owners, the couple Berdún and Azucena, and the many other minor characters, but he is unusually successful in what he set out to do. If there is any doubt in the reader's mind as to where one part of his tale joined a preceding part, Vega hastens to supply the events necessary to dispel the confusion.

Like Hidalgo and Del Campo, but differing from Hernández, Ascasubi himself introduces his singer and in twenty-eight quintillas accounts for the circumstances relative to the

telling of the story. Santos Vega and Rufo Tolosa get down from their horses simultaneously at the pulpería,¹ the common meeting ground for the countrymen. Though strangers, they shake hands and unsaddle their horses together under the shade of a tree. When Rufo removes the saddle blanket from his horse, the letter Y is disclosed; something of such meaning to the payador, that he crosses himself. This is the occasion for a question from Rufo. Vega discloses his identity, and they sit down in the shade to cut their tobacco, smoke their pipes, and pass the horn bottle while Vega proceeds to discuss the Y which aroused Rufo's interest. For him it brings funeral memories for it is the brand of one who had been the terror of the country. He describes the end of this individual thus:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| donde hizo llorar a muchos | Where he made many innocent |
| inocentes desgraciados | and unfortunate ones cry, |
| y burlaba la justicia | and flaunted the justice |
| de este mundo <u>matreriando</u> | of this world, by killing, |
| hasta que al fin lo alcanzó | until finally God's hand |
| la mano de Dios, y al cabo | reached him and gave him |
| dióle un castigo terrible | a terrible punishment in the |
| del modo menos pensado. ² | least expected manner. |

Vega says that his story has a long argument and expresses his desire for a place where he may take his time at

1. pulpería - wine shop.

2. Santos Vega: op. cit., p. 33.

telling it. Rufo hospitably responds to the suggestion and urges him to return with him to his poor ranchito and see his chinita; there they can take mate and eat roasted meat. In accepting, Vega says:

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Amigo, un cariño tal | Friend, it is impossible to |
| no es posible depreciarlo | be unappreciative of such affec- |
| ansí ya de agradecido | tion; thus thankfully, I decide |
| me resuelvo a acompañarlo, ¹ | to accompany you. |

They take another drink from the bottle and start for Rufo's home five leagues away in the district of Borombón. Juana Petrona the chinita of Rufo has half a heifer hanging in the yard of the little home preparatory for their evening meal. The kettle is put on to boil, the saddles are thrown into a corner of the house, and the men are soon comfortably taking mate in front of the open fire. It needs only the deliciously browned meat and two bottles of wine to make Vega feel a little happy and ready to sing for Juana and Rufo. First he urges that the wife sing. She protests in the following lines:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Yo de cantora no privo, | I do not profess to be a |
| la moza a Vega le dijo; | singer, the girl said to Vega |
| mientras que de usted colijo | while I understand that you |
| que es cantor facultativo. | are a gifted singer. |
| Ansí mesmo no me esquivo | As I cannot escape, |
| antes le voy a obligar-- | I am going to oblige you, |

1. Idem: p. 34.

| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| y acabando de templar | Then finishing tuning her |
| la guitarra, por el tres | guitar, |
| cantó una cifra después | She sang a number later which |
| que a Vega lo hizo llorar-- ¹ | made Vega cry. |

This moves Vega to sing with such pathos that his listeners cry too.

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Rufo y su mujer estaban | Rufo and his wife were |
| tan de veras conmovidos | so truly touched |
| que en silencio enternecidos | that one after the other |
| de hilo en hilo <u>lagrimaban</u> . ² | began to cry in silence. |

With this propitious beginning, Vega is assured of a sympathetic audience for the pathetic tale he is about to unfold. He introduces his story with a description of the country in which the action is to take place; the flat grass covered pampa lands, with occasional swampy sections around which grow the strong swamp grass which looks like a forest in the distance; the sweet clovers; the animal life that inhabits the lake, the ducks and the swans; ..it is a beautiful little picture, perfect in detail. He then pictures the marvellous estancia of La Flor with its trees and buildings, and of its owners the rich Andalucian Don Faustino Bejarano and his beautiful wife Estrella who are loved by the whole country-side for their generosity. He recalls having been present at the baptismal

1. Idem: p. 37.

2. Ibid.

ceremonies of the heir Ángel whom God finally sent after many years to bless Doña Estrella and Don Faustino. Many coaches come down from Buenos Aires to Chascomús for the ceremony and fiesta in which every one becomes most luxuriously and happily drunk, even to the priests.

After this recital Vega feels a little sleepy and just as the cock crows the hour of midnight retires to his bed which is the floor with his saddle as a pillow.

The following morning the poet aids Vega in his tale by describing the early dawn while the bard rests from his efforts of the night before. All the little song birds are named as the dawn appears; the cattle are described as they lazily stroll to the centre of the round up; the chickens fly to the ground from their roost in the trees; Juana, neatly combed, is busy in the kitchen. The story is temporarily discontinued that day while Rufo takes Vega and his chinita to some neighborhood races. But that night the three are again found sucking mate by the fire and Vega is ready to begin. He brings the Mellizos (twins) into the world and buries their parents, employees of the estancian La Flor. Estrella takes pity on the orphans and nurses them with her own child Ángel. Jacinto, the father of the twins is said to be always good, while Luis the thinner is to be the criminal and the horrible example of the inefficacy of environment. The latter shows criminal traits from childhood; he is cruel to animals; he hurts little Ángel; he steals a poncho.

Then Vega digresses in recounting the method of Indian

attacks and their cruelties. He does it so realistically that Juana must be cheered up by a funny story from Rufo. The men drink a little too freely from the bottle and start to quarreling over the statement that Rufo knows a better singer than Santos Vega, one Monsalbo, who had told the tale of the capture of Lunareja by the Indians. Vega takes exception to the details of this tale, saying that he knows it all and will tell it to them as it should be. The poet accounts for their quarreling in the following verses:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Es cosa cierta y sabida | It is a known and certain thing |
| que al juntarse dos paisanos, | that when two country men meet |
| para tomar la mañana | to take early <u>mate</u> |
| o hacer las once en el campo; | or take drink at eleven |
| por más amigos que sean, | no matter how friendly they are |
| cuando apuran mucho el trago | if they drink too much |
| y se les va la bebida | and the drink goes to |
| a la cabeza, ¡adios, deablos! | their heads, good bye |
| la amistá y el parentesco | friendship and relationship |
| el respeto al compadrazgo, | the respect for pride, |
| las promesas de cariffo, | promises of affection, |
| todo eso lo echan a un lado, | are all put to one side, |
| y sólo a contrapuntarse | and only for quarreling |
| se sienten ya preparaos. ¹ | do they feel themselves now prepared. |

Juana urges the men to desist from their quarreling,

1. Ascasubi: Santos Vega, p. 76.

and the story is soon on its way again. A new character, a tenant on the estancia, Genera Berdún, is introduced and assumes the centre of the stage for some time. He marries Azucena, a charming young girl of fifteen, another of Estrella's protégés. Luis the bad twin runs away after being involved in robbing a Portuguese. Berdún and his wife are very happy with their little ranch and cows, the gifts of Estrella, except that the husband is constantly mourning over the captivity of his sister Rosa, called Lunareja because of a mark resembling a moon on her left cheek. Some years before her husband had been killed, and she with her infant son Manuel were carried off by the Indian chief Cocomel.

Ángel the young heir is sent to Buenos Aires to be trained as a priest, where he remains for four years until he is ordained and sent out into the town of Pergamino.

Perhaps too much attention has been given to Vega and his hosts Juana and Rufo, but it has been done in a conscious effort to give a true spirit of the poem; to impress the realism which has been attained by pictures of the homely life of this couple. Their sympathetic reactions to the story so perfectly express the naivety of the common gaucho family; their credence of the stories exemplifies their simplicity. Juana's heart attack over especially dramatic and pathetic parts; Rufo's wakeful night after another part of the story; Vega's wakefulness because of fleas which had invaded his sleeping quarters are interesting details. No more reference will be made to Vega and his audience, but let it be remembered that they have a very real interest in the story as it continues to its end.

Berdún is called to do military service in the proverbial manner, and his first duty is to run down a criminal who had murdered an old fisherman. An old rastriador (tracker) leads the soldiers to the lair of the fugitive, who turns out to be Luis the bad twin. He is sent to Chascamús and later to Buenos Aires for trial. After this escapade Berdún starts for home, only to be overtaken in an Indian raid. This has a disastrous ending for the Indians, for all are killed except one who utters these words as they are ready to kill him:

No matando ché, Berdún amico, Listen, don't kill me, friend
Berdún,
que mi parló Lunareja.¹ for Lunareja is my mother.

It is Manuel the nephew of Berdún who speaks. It is not quite evident just how the supposed Indian recognized his uncle, but such discrepancies are passed over in the excitement of the moment. Manuel is saved and goes to live with his uncle, where he learns to read and write and be a good Christian. In a later Indian attack he mysteriously disappears.

A day of cattle branding reminds Vega of the good twin Jacinto, who for his very goodness assumes a minor place in his tale. This unfortunate youth was once seriously injured by a bull in a branding and the following ambiguous lines sum up his life until the end of the poem.

1. Idem: p. 136.

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Desde ese día Jacinto | From that day, Jacinto |
| ya comenzó a lamentarse--- | began to pine away--- |
| y su pobre mujercita | and his poor little woman |
| creía enviudar cada instante, | thought to be a widow any moment, |
| Jacinto vivió y vivió | Jacinto, lived and lived, |
| hasta que vino más tarde | until later, he came |
| a morir, y así vivió | to die, and thus lived |
| con más salud en adelante. ¹ | from that time on with more |
| | health. |

The prison life of Luis the bad twin next claims the attention of the payador. Through Estrella's influence with the viceroy, his first sentence of death is revoked, and a ten-year imprisonment is the sentence. Again using her influence this time is reduced to two and a half years. Winning the confidence of the guards Luis has his irons removed, and goes out for a walk a few days before his sentence is up. He kills the guard in charge and flees for the province of Paraná. The trackers are so close on his trail that he is forced into the river and apparently disappears from sight. A few days later an unidentified body is washed up, and all believe that it is Luis. The ever forgiving Estrella says mass for his soul, and this seems to be the end of the bad twin.

In the mean time the Indians have completely destroyed the estancia of La Flor and the small ranch of Berdún, and the

1. Idem: p. 143.

owners have had to seek new homes. The rich Don Faustino buys a new ranch Los Milagros near Pergamino, and Berdún moves to a poor little hut near Chascamús. One night a stranger enters the house of Berdún and stabs him while he sleeps. Hearing his groans, Azucena seizes the first thing available as a defense, a hot brand iron of the estancia (the Y), and brands the chest of the murderer. She draws the dagger from her husband's breast and flees into the road for help. It is early morning and some soldiers out on a scouting expedition find her with the dagger and assume that she has killed her husband. They go to the ranch house and their beliefs are apparently confirmed for Berdún is cold. At this point the Indians arrive and the soldiers flee with the grief stricken widow. Her mind becomes temporarily deranged for she is obsessed with the idea that anyone she sees has killed her husband and wants to hunt the mark of the brand on their chests. Through a decision of the doctor she is judged insane and given into the charge of Esterlla who takes her to her estancia.

There seems little chance of making anything but a tragedy out of the poem at this point, for to all appearances the good twin is an invalid and his wife expects to become a widow at any moment; the bad twin is well buried and mass has been said for him; Berdún the good family gaucho has been burned in the Indian raid which followed his murder; Azucena is insane. But Vega evidently has other plans for the end of his story, for many pages of verse follow.

The bard shifts the action of the narrative from

Buenos Aires to Pergamino the town nearest to the new estancia of Don Faustino. On a beautiful summer morning, on the sixth of January 1805, the owner of the estancia, his wife Estrella and the widow Azucena are drinking chocolate at the home of Ángel who is presiding priest in the town. Suddenly the sexton for apparently no reason begins to ring the bell. Ángel rushes out to tell him to stop it and the sexton gives the following information:

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ?Por qué repico? | Why am I ringing the bell? |
| !por un milagro de Dios! | Because of a miracle of God, |
| pues por mis ojos he visto | For with my own eyes I have |
| llegar a la comandancia | seen arriving at the barracks |
| sano y bueno, ahora mesmito | this very minute, healthy and |
| al capitán don Berdún, | well, captain don Berdún, |
| con su hermana y su sobrino | with his sister and nephew. |
| !Velay están!? no los ven | Just look, there they are. Don't |
| apiandose? ¹ | you see them dismounting? |

Azucena faints in the arms of her husband, in her joy of reunion. Berdún carries her into the house to revive her, and the friends follow to learn the explanation of this miracle. It seems that on the day when Berdún was supposed to have died and been burned to a cinder, his nephew Manuel who was among the raiding Indians, rescued him and carried him to the tent of Cocmel the chief. Then for twenty months he nursed him back to health. When Berdún was well enough to travel, he and his sis-

1. Idem: p. 306.

ter, who was even more beautiful than before her captivity, and Manuel left the camp to return to civilization. Rejoicing over the return of his good tenant whom he had loved like a son, Faustino orders wine, and they celebrate the occasion until six o'clock that evening when another event of great importance to the story takes place.

The day before the return of Berdún, Jacinto the good twin was walking in his little garden when he stumbled over a bench and injured himself in such a way that he was unable to get up. Blood came from his mouth, and when his wife Rita and the little daughter found him, they thought he was dead. Their opinion was corroborated by a doctor bound for a neighboring estancia who happened to stop there to get a fresh horse. Coincidentally a stranger of ghastly appearance with scarred face and only one eye arrived to help the widow take her husband to the house. He manifested a peculiar concern in the family, and offered to sit up the night with them. The next day he harnessed the oxen to the cart and offers to goad them on their slow journey to the churchyard of Pergamino. Within four squares of the church, the widow hurried ahead to order the grave prepared for Jacinto, thereby turning the rejoicing party of Faustino into one of grief. The stranger in the meantime was sitting with his back to the oxen occasionally goading them, as is the custom, when suddenly the dead man on the cart rises up and says, "Where are you taking me?" The shock was too much for the stranger who topples over backwards onto the ground where the wheel passes over his chest and as the poet says "it was broken

into pieces." Jacinto stopped the oxen and calling for help he placed the stranger in his bier and continued on his way to the holy ground.

When Rita arrives, Ángel orders the grave dug. As the sexton is giving the orders he sees the dead man walking and starts ringing the bell again. The inmates rush out and another joyful reunion takes place. A doctor is called who pronounces Jacinto cured as a result of a broken abscess which had formed when injured by the bull, and the stranger in a dying condition. That night the stranger weakly confesses that he is Luis the bad twin and asks forgiveness of all. After his death the mark of the branding iron is found on his chest.

The next day after the funeral of Luis, Faustino takes his reunited family to his estancia and there at his table makes the announcement that from then on they are all to consider themselves his children. He divides the estancia of La Flor with all the stock on it between Berdún and Jacinto; leaves his new estancia to his son Ángel, and gives the land formerly held by Berdún to Manuel and that held by Jacinto to the sexton for his enthusiasm in ringing the bells.

Vega concludes his story by saying that three years after Faustino had donated the lands the richest men around the country were Manuel, Jacinto and Berdún. Then having finished after nine days of hospitality on the part of Juana and Rufo the old payador returns to his own country. The concluding lines of the poet show the hosts' appreciation of the words of Santos Vega.

Así fué; al día siguiente
 con su bragao ensillado
 estaba ya el payador
 y al despidirse, un regalo
 le hizo su amigo Toloso
 dándole el mejor caballo
 parejero que tenía:
 sin haberse descuidado
 tampoco Juana Petrona
 pues ya le había cribado
 los más lindos calzoncillos
 que se puso el gaucho Santos
 desde que nació cantor
 hasta que murió cantando.¹

And so it was: the next day
 with his fine horse saddled
 the payador was there
 and upon leaving his friend
 Toloso made him a present,
 giving him the best race horse
 that he had:
 without being neglectful
 either, Juana Petrona
 who had already embroidered
 the finest trousers
 which the gaucho Santos
 ever put on from the time
 he was born a singer until
 he died singing.

The last two lines are the poet's only reference to
 the legend of Santos Vega's death.

1. Ascasubi: Santos Vega, p. 334.

VII. Classes of Gauchos in Santos Vega.

Ascasubi presents in his Santos Vega five gaucho types: the payador, the family man, the soldier, the rastriador (tracker) and the criminal. This does not imply that each type represents a distinct class; that the payador was never a criminal or the family man was never a soldier. This division is made with the purpose of showing that the word gaucho is not synonymous for criminal or payador and that the life of the gaucho is neither all sad nor all glad. Though there are gauchos who are cruel as well as kind, ignorant as well as intelligent and so on, it is nevertheless true that as these five types are studied it will be found that there are some few characteristics common to them all.

The payador in the poem is the greatest of all South American bards, Santos Vega. In the several literary interpretations he has ranged from a spiritually minded singer to a criminal. Just what is the character of Santos Vega in this poem? He apparently has a section of the country which he calls home, for as he takes leave of Juana and Rufo at the end of the book he says: "If God wishes it, I shall return to my country."¹ At no time does he have work which calls him from his singing; he has no family or loved one; his profession is his singing and it is a high calling to him. He is constantly referred to as old, though there is no reference to his hair or beard or

1. Idem: p. 333.

manner of walking which would indicate age.

He is famous and honored for the poet says of him in the opening verses:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| El mas viejo se llamaba | The oldest was named |
| Santos Vega el payador | Santos Vega the bard |
| gaucho más concertador, | the best singer |
| que en ese tiempo privaba | who was at that time possessed |
| de escrito y de letor... ¹ | of the knowledge of writing |
| | and reading... |
| Tal merece un payador | Of such was a famous bard |
| <u>mentao</u> como Santos Vega, | like Santos Vega worthy, |
| que a cualquier pago que | in whatever district he arrives |
| llega, | |
| el <u>parejero</u> mejor | the best race horse |
| gaucho ninguno le niega. ² | no gaucho would deny him. |

His courtesy inspired affection in his gentle hostess Juana, for the poet says that though she has just become acquainted with him she has never shown more affection to anyone.³ He is humble for in his unwillingness to molest any one he is willing to sleep in any corner of the house,⁴ and in spite of his fame he is the humble servant of Rufo when he first meets him.⁵ The payador is of a religious nature for he says his

1. Idem: p. 30.

2. Idem: p. 32.

3. Idem: p. 37.

4. Idem: p. 52.

5. Idem: p. 53.

prayers both morning and evening.

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| y dando las buenas noches | and telling them good night |
| él también las recibió | and also receiving a good night |
| y antes de echarse a dormir | before going to sleep |
| bajo el poncho rezó ¹ | he said his prayers under his poncho |

In the morning he went to greet his hosts after he had said them again.²

When Vega arrives at the sad part of his tale, he becomes so moved with his own memories that Juana and Rufo think him ill, and inquire about his health. He answers that there is never a day passes but that he mingles his tears with those of his friends about whom he is singing, for this period is so very sad for them.³

But Vega has a less serious side to his nature, and he even has the fault of being quarrelsome in his cups. He laughs uproariously when he hears the gaucho story of Rufo, and almost swallows his cigar in the effort to control himself.⁴ He becomes quarrelsome and is very careful of his reputation as the most famous bard, when Rufo suggests that he knew a gaucho with as good a memory as his, as learned and as good a singer as he, he is stupfied, for he is very punctilious in his pride

1. Idem: p. 52.

2. Idem: p. 56.

3. Idem: p. 234.

4. Idem: p. 66.

in his art.¹

Vega shows that he is as well versed as any gaucho in the pampa lore, for he says that any poor gaucho can explain an eclipse by passing in front of the candle in his room, and tell the direction on a cloudy night by noting the direction that the dry grass falls, and that hominy will cook much quicker if an iron ring is dropped into the kettle, and that meat must be boiled three times to make it tender as a roasting ear. To break a horse easily a gaucho must turn the horse's ears wrong side out and tie them down, and that to keep an ostrich from running away (once he has been caught with the bolas) the gaucho must take four feathers from the bird's wing and run them through its nose; then it will not move from the door step.²

There is no trace of the bandit of Gutiérrez in the humble singer of Ascasubi.

There are three representatives of the ordinary family man type of gaucho in Santos Vega, Rufo Toloso the host of the bard, Jacinto the good twin and Berdún the favorite tenant on the estancia of La Flor. Rufo is hospitable and proud of his wife and house. He apparently has little work to do, for in the nine days when Vega is at his home telling the story of Los Mellizos de la Flor the only thing they do besides listen is to go one day to some neighborhood horse races, and another to a branding.³ Meat seems to be plenty, for they kill a heifer

1. Idem: p. 68.

2. Idem: p. 146.

3. Idem: p. 139.

then continue the song of the bard. Rufo is unmolested by the compulsory draft and seems to be living an easy, enjoyable life with no complaint of any sort.

Jacinto is not so fortunate because of an accident in his youth, but he works quietly at home in his garden in spite of ill health, and has no other worries.

Berdún is an example of the soldier, gaucho as well as the family man, but his soldiering does not bring him such misfortune as in the case of Martín Fierro, or Contreras in the poems of Hernández and Hidalgo.

Vega in describing the appearance of Berdún says:

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| ...un tal Genaro Berdún | A certain Genero Berdún |
| el mozo más guapetón | a youth, of the finest |
| y <u>forzudo</u> en ese tiempo, | and strongest of that time, |
| otro día en las carreras | the other day in the races |
| un gaucho lo amenazó | a gaucho threatened |
| a pegarle un rebencazo | to hit him with a whip |
| Genero muy suavemente | Genero apparently |
| al parecer, abrazó | very easily put his arm around |
| al gaucho por la cintura, | the gaucho's waist, |
| nada más y lo soltó | just that and let him go, |
| hecho una bolsa de guesos | he was a bag of bones |
| boquiando como un pichón. ¹ | gaping like a young bird. |

He is a good natured gaucho, for when Luis calls him all the vile names a bad little gaucho could think of after getting the good whipping he deserved, Berdún merely laughs at

1. Idem: p. 87.

Luis.¹ At his marriage with Azucena he is described as handsome, fair, and of extremely charming manners.² He is very fond of his wife, and never quarreled with her a single time, according to the bard.

Berdún never complained at the treatment he received as a soldier. He seems very willing to fight, for he remarks to his wife the very day that he is called for temporary service, that if the Indians should come it would be a nice thing to give them a beating.³ Yet when the orderly comes with his orders he makes a pretence at objection by saying sarcastically

"Vea eso y apenas son
las siete de la mañana;
de suerte que don Quintana
habrá dao un madrugón
para mandarme citar
con tanto apuro."⁴

"Look at that, just barely
seven in the morning;
It's a wonder don Quintana
didn't make a surprise attack
at dawn, ordering me to appear
thus in such a hurry."

Berdún is called a lieutenant and serves only under special orders. Upon appearing before the commander he is greeted affectionately by him, and given instructions to watch for Indians with fifteen men, and especially to track down the gaucho criminal who killed the fisherman. This being completed, Berdún can go home. When he takes charge of his men they give

1. Idem: p. 89.

2. Idem: p. 194.

3. Idem: p. 96.

4. Idem: p. 97.

him a good hand clasp, for he is their beloved lieutenant.¹
 He is ever obedient. He had orders to start on his scouting
 when the morning bells should ring; promptly at the first sound
 he orders his soldiers out though they are eating bread and
 cheese.²

Two famous rastriadores appear in the pages of Santos
Vega, Anselmo the San-Juanino and Sexto Berón of San Vicente
 on the banks of the Paraná. The first is an assistant to Berdún
 in his search for Luis, and the second leads the search for him
 after his escape from prison. Anselmo is a polite old gaucho,
 and very self assured. He says of the criminal:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| "Yo sigo atrás de vos | "I follow behind you |
| hasta hacerte encalecar | until I tie you up. |
| andá no más, saltiador." ³ | Just go on, murderer." |

After visiting the scene of the murder, Anselmo tells
 Berdún that the man was killed standing, that the tracks of the
 murderer are the same as those of a man who stole from one
 Valdés. Then after following the tracks for a while the track-
 er says that the criminal lies drunk in a distant thicket, for
 the steps of the horse are wavering, and the tracks of the man
 where he dismounts in the sand are deep, all signs of drunken-
 ness.⁴ After the capture of Luis, fresh tracks are found which

1. Idem: p. 106.

2. Ibid.

3. Idem: p. 113.

4. Idem: p. 118.

indicate that a party of Indians are scouting, and in the moonlight the tracker sees the ostriches which are running toward the party, an indication that they have smelled the Indians behind them.

The San Vicent rastriador has other occupations besides that of tracking, for the poet says of him:

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Hombre gaucho, alegre, guapo | A fine happy gaucho, |
| <u>mano abierto</u> y servidor | open handed and polite |
| así todos le tenían | Thus all had for him |
| respeto y estimación; | respect and honor |
| porque en aquellos parajes | for in those parts |
| no tan solo era Berón | not only was Berón |
| el alcalde del partido, | sherif of the county, |
| sino diablo y rastriador. ¹ | but a devil of a fellow and |
| | a tracker. |

Later the poet says that Berón used all the intelligence of a good tracker in finding Luis, for he saw where the criminal dragged a ring of his saddle in the sand then took off his boots and cleaned them in another place.²

The criminal gaucho of Santos Vega is a result of his inheritance, and not of his environment as in the case of the criminals of both preceding and following gaucho writers. Neither unfairness on the part of the government, nor the enmity of the father of a lady-love are responsible for the crim-

1. Idem: p. 207.

2. Idem: p. 211.

inal life of Luis the bad twin. The author leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that he is completely bad, he has no saving graces such as daring or charm which might win the heart of a lady. The author does not even allow a repentance before dying, and points out that the criminal received just what he deserved when the justice of God allowed him only enough time to ask pardon of those whom he had harmed.¹ Early references to Luis, as seen above in the story of Santos Vega show him to have been possessed of criminal tendencies in early youth. But he has a sort of stubborn bravery when he received the whipping from Berdún:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| De ahí, boca abajo en el suelo | From there, with mouth open |
| largo a largo se tiró | he was thrown on the ground, |
| y en la picana desnuda | and on his naked back, |
| diez lazazos aguantó, | endured ten blows from the |
| sin dar un solo quejido | lazo without a single com- |
| ni tampoco se encogió; ² | plaint nor shrinking from them. |

But when it is over a revengeful spirit shows in the boy, for he vows "to get" Berdún some day.

He is insolent and independent when captured, for he tells his captors that he will neither speak by force, or by fire, but will confess if he is treated well.³ When appearing before the judges he continues to assume this indifferent at-

1. Idem: p. 328.

2. Idem: p. 89.

3. Idem: p. 126.

titude, laying the blame of his crimes on God, and asking for leniency on the grounds of his youth. He promises to mend his ways as he signs his name to his statements with a cross.¹ He is shown every kindness in prison, and he is astute enough to be generous to the guards in order to get greater privileges, yet when the good natured Cruz, his guard is least suspecting, Luis is capable of stabbing him in the back. The kindness of Estrella, Ángel or the guards finds no response in the criminal heart of Luis the saltador.

In the comparison just made of the five gaucho types found in the Santos Vega, it has been discovered that there are characteristics common to them all. Therefore it may be said that the gaucho, an impersonal gaucho, has certain definite qualities regardless of his occupation in life. He is above all brave, a lover of freedom of life as well as of thought. He is possessed of a dignity and reserve not necessarily found in people of the lower class, but which is inseparable with those who spend many solitary hours on the plain and who accustom themselves to be resourceful in both action and thought. He may be unversed in scholastic learning, but he has recompensed himself by interpreting the universe and adjusting himself to his own particular type of struggle for existence, perhaps even better than the scholar has done. He may not exactly understand God according to accepted standards or place the Virgin in the scheme of things, but he takes comfort in saying his prayers

1. Idem: p. 155.

beneath his poncho at night and makes the sign of the cross to ward off evil influences. He possesses that spirit of generosity and hospitality found only in a primitive people which has unlimited resources of food and land and has not yet put itself in competition with a greedy world. He has his code of honor which does not admit of stealing or unfaithfulness to wife or family; he is simple in his love for his china and cherishes her even more than his saddle and his horse. He is not ambitious for the wealth of the world or personal advancement. For this he brought upon himself the wrath of Sarmiento. But it is not yet proven that it is a good think to transplant the gaucho into an environment for which he is not fitted, any more than it is a certain thing that the North American Indian should be transplanted. Spiritual and physical death is often the result of such gardening.

VIII. The Background for the Gaucho.

The gaucho as an isolated figure is devoid of meaning; it is necessary to create a background into which he may retire, whether he be the fugitive, the soldier, the rastrador, the melancholy payador or the joyous follower of the herd. Ascasubi has adequately provided the scenario for the gauchos in his Santos Vega; the poem is extremely rich in colorful descriptions of the fauna and flora of the vast Argentine pampa and in realistic pictures of Argentine estancia and city life. As regards the pampa the author might have been writing in the twentieth century instead of the nineteenth. The same luxurious wild grass waves in the pampa breeze; the same birds and animals make their homes around the low places in the pampa; the same little adobe ranchitos huddle under the shade of the willows which border the pampa streams; the same tree bordered drives cut across the plains to the eucalyptus groves which look like forests on the even horizon, yet which hide in their depths the old plastered estancia home with its cool patios and rose gardens. Some of the romance of the pampa has gone with the Indian, who no longer dashes out upon the helpless whites, but it has lost its dangers as well. The owners of the estancias may run over to Europe instead of driving leisurely to Buenos Aires for recreation, but the life is essentially the same. The capital may count its population in millions instead of thousands, but it still feeds upon the agricultural and pastoral pursuits of the countrymen.

The pampa is virgin land covered with rank prairie grass, though in literature it is often referred to as a desert. The following note taken from the poet Ascasubi's explanation of the term pampa may aid in the understanding of the term. "Though all the land in the province of Buenos Aires is a plain, properly speaking, that land called Pampa by the gauchos is the deserted land near the northern Indian frontier where there is no private property and the Indian tribes roam at large."¹ In the early pages of the narrative, the poet says that the pampa seems a desert at noon, for from horizon to horizon there is no sign of life, not even a bird is seen.² The heat is so intense that a deep sea often appears in a mirage on the surface of the pampa.³ He says that the north wind as it comes down from Brazil is so hot that it burns the green grass, and yet again he calls the north wind a soft wind.⁴ The north wind is always enervating; if the season is dry, it is hot, if there is much rain fall, the wind is damp which makes the walls and patios drip and saps the energy of the populace. On the other hand, the south wind is invigorating, bringing the hurricane. The following is a brief but effective description of the hurricane.

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| muy fresquita y muy serena | very fresh and very serene |
| fué la nueva madrugada: | was the new dawn |

1. Idem: p. 29.
2. Idem: p. 30.
3. Ibid.
4. Idem: p. 53.

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| no habiendo en el cielo nada | with nothing in the sky |
| que un tempestá anunciase | to indicate a tempest |
| ni temor de que se alzase | nor was there fear that there |
| redepenste una tormenta, | should arise a storm so quickly |
| tan furiosa y tan violenta | so furious and violent |
| que los ranchos arrancase | that it should blow down the |
| pero, a las nueve del día... | houses, but at nine o'clock... |
| fué cuando se oyeron truenos; | they heard thunder |
| y por el poniente se vía | and from the east could be seen |
| un nubarrón que subía | a cloud which rose |
| el horizonte cubriendo | covering the horizon |
| de oscuridá... | with darkness... |
| media hora no más duró | The fury of the wind |
| la furia del ventarrón... ¹ | lasted only a half an hour... |

Another characteristic of the pampa is its dense fog which hangs over the river lands. It is confusing to the gaucho for it makes animals and bushes seem to increase in size.²

The stars have meaning to the gaucho, for they tell him the time by night, and he admires their beauty as he lies under his poncho. To Vega it seems that the wind has loosened the stars that shoot across the skys. They have named their bolas, las tres Marías after a favorite constellation.

There are very few trees mentioned as native to the pampa. The ombú is one of the most common with its gnarled

1. Idem: p. 241.

2. Idem: p. 212.

roots protruding above the surface of the ground, and its meager foliage offering little shade for the weary traveler. Perhaps the age of the ombú and not its efficiency has won for it the fame it possesses in song and poetry. The paradise tree, the fig, the eucalyptus, the alamos (a sort of sycamore), the ñandubay (a very hard wood used for poles and furniture) and the napindaces which have thorny branches which float on the river are other trees mentioned.

The poet mentions the sweet clover many times, then the daisy and the manzanilla, a small daisy-like flower, and in a moment of enthusiasm he says the whole pampa is breaking forth in sweet smelling flowers.¹

Ascasubi is very much interested in animal and bird life for he gives by name eight different animals, and twenty-two birds. The animals are: foxes, lions, skunks, nutria (sort of beaver), deer, jack-rabbits, dogs, and does.² The occasion for listing the animals is the Indian raid which drives the animals before it, just as the forest fire drives before it the animals in the Cautiva of Echeverría. The birds are introduced in various parts of the poem, at daybreak, at noon, etc. They are:

avestruces -- ostrich.

becasinas -- like a snipe.

calandrias -- lark.

cardenales -- grey song bird with red head.

1. Idem: p. 54.

2. Idem: p. 220.

carpinteros -- wood-pecker.

cigüeñas -- storks.

cisnes -- swans.

cotorros -- magpie.

chajá -- large grey fighting bird with white neck. Its name comes from the sound it makes which means vamos in Guaraní.

chimangos -- hawk.

flamencos rosados -- pink flamingos.

gallinetas negras -- black wild guineas.

gansos -- geese.

golondrinas -- swallows.

horneros -- something like a thrush; makes a mud nest like an oven.

loros -- parrots.

mirasol -- large black bird which looks at the sun all day.

ñacurutuces -- small owl.

pato-reales -- ducks.

terateros -- grey bird with a feather on its head, and very tall thin legs; named from the sound it makes.

venteros -- bird which rides on the cows' backs.

zamaragullones -- water birds like the crow which fly little.¹

Ascasubi does not give a picture of Indian camp life as Echeverría, Hernández, or Gutiérrez the novelist, but he does give a vivid description of the Indian malón, or attack. At dawn the Moors (Indians) surround their adevino or medicine

1. Idem: pp. 38, 39, 53, 54, 61.

doctor who assures them that they are to have good or bad luck according to his understanding. If it is good they start on their raid. They come in a half moon formation, naked except for a loincloth and feathers and bells on elbows and knees. There are bells on the horses as well. The Indians are painted in a horrible, frightening way, and add to the confusion by blowing on horns. After the advance formation, come the chinas (wives) on the old horses, as many as three on a horse. When these Moors fight with the Christians and it seems that they are losing, the chinas take flight, throwing their infants down as they go. But if they are victorious the Indians cut off the heads of old and young Christians (no mention of scalping) and save the younger women for themselves. The prettiest go to the chief who marries them in his way, and woe to the woman who is unfaithful to her new husband. If there are not enough women to distribute among all, the less fortunate Indians go crying drunkenly back to camp.¹

A second malón is mentioned when the estancia of La Flor is completely destroyed under a combined attack of Pampa, Araucano and Raquel Indians. Two thousand warriors circle Chascomús. Three thousand go north and after their raid the country is left in ashes.² A third malón destroys the little home of Berdún.³ Finally the viceroy, the marques Sobremonte, tries to make peace with the Indians by sending missionaries and

1. Idem: pp. 61, 62, 63, 64.

2. Idem: p. 223.

3. Idem: p. 252.

crosses to the tribes, but what the Indians wanted was money with a cross on it. They are said to have originated the following refrain:

Pata en tierra, plata en mano.¹ Foot on the dirt, money in hand.

The viceroy is forced to send whiskey and dress materials to even arouse their interest. This overture has the desired result and soon the Indians with their wives and children begin to come from their tents laden with ponchos, furs and ostrich plumes to barter with the Christians. They even went so far as Buenos Aires.² In January 1805 the viceroy signs the treaty of peace in the presence of six chiefs. In due time the captives are all returned to their homes.³

The estanciero is presented in a most favorable light by Ascasubi. In fact, if all employers were as fair and as generous as Don Faustino Bejarano, there would be no need of strikes and unions and the modern paraphernalia of defense against capitalistic oppression. He is an extremely rich man and it is said that he used more in one day than did the viceroy in a year.⁴ He maintained a hospital in his estancia where any one in need might go and he or Estrella might personally attend the unfortunate one.⁵ When the much desired son arrives the father

1. Idem: p. 272.

2. Idem: p. 273.

3. Idem: p. 296.

4. Idem: p. 295.

5. Idem: p. 39.

squanders enormous funds in the baptismal fiesta. Two coaches with an escort of soldiers come from Buenos Aires to attend the ceremony. Since they are people of rank, the men and women wear powdered wigs. The ladies wear large jewels in their ears, silver mesh in their hair and embroidered velvet skirts. At neck and wrist they wear finely tucked and pleated ruffles, and a sort of cuff from the elbow to the wrist made of cloth of gold. The men wear short trousers tight at the knee, blue and white striped silk hose and gold buckles on their shoes. Their swords hang in white leather belts; their hair is worn in a bag. After the ceremony the guests all dance until the cock crows when they eat many cakes and jellies in the shape of a castle. The next afternoon they go back to the estancia to celebrate there for four days more.¹

As gifts to the servants, Faustino gives four heifers, two ovens of bread, one barrel of white wine, many bottles of caña (drink made of cane), tobacco, mate and three pesos to each servant and five to each soldier.

The estancia La Flor has a very fine house of adobe with tiled roof and all done in the very finest workmanship. Corridors extend from the main part of the house to the two kitchens. Back of these are found the graneries, the armory, the carriage houses, the leather curing rooms and the mayor-domo's house. A deep ditch full of water surrounds the place crossed by a medieval draw bridge which is supposed to protect the house from Indian raids. Outside this ditch are the fields,

1. Idem: pp. 47, 48, 49.

the shepherd's house and sheep folds. Traveling is done in coaches and the estancieros stop to visit their friends and spend the night if the journey is too long. On one of these trips Faustino stops at the home of an Andalusian friend who is as kind and courteous as his guest. While they are there Berdún arrives, and he is admitted into the family as an equal, though he is only a tenant on Faustino's land. The host furnishes generous refreshment to Berdún and his soldiers.

In the winters Estrella and Faustino live in their town house in Buenos Aires where they number among their friends doctors, lawyers, bishops and even the viceroy, because of their wealth. The evenings are spent in playing truquiflor,¹ until nine o'clock, when they all go to bed.

Faustino and his wife are very orthodoxly religious, for when their only child is just fourteen, then send him to Buenos Aires to dedicate his life to the priesthood, as the highest calling for a rich man's son; they ride on horse-back to mass in a nearby town when they are at the estancia.²

The best example of the generosity of Faustino is the distribution of his lands among Berdún, Jacinto, Manuel and the sexton, and his own son.

Little of the Buenos Aires life is seen in Santos Vega, except as glimpsed in the home of Faustino, and the life of the prisoner. Occasional references are made to the viceroy. The society life was no doubt centred in his activities, but as

1. truquiflor - popular card game, something like naipes.

2. Idem: p. 296.

the gaucho would have little to do with the officials of the viceroyship, there would be no excuse to introduce them in verses primarily concerned with the gaucho. The viceroy was evidently a court of last appeal, for he was moved to leniency by Estrella's tears and granted life to Luis;¹ on a second appeal he gave orders for the removal of the irons from the prisoner.² Once the viceroy was almost drowned when his carriage stuck in the mud of the Buenos Aires streets, and the prisoners were immediately ordered to repair the roads.³ Reference is made to the fiesta given in Buenos Aires in honor of the ascension of Charles IV to the Spanish throne, in which a special play that had been practiced for three weeks was given. The alcalde was supposed to have said, "Tengo en el pecho un volcón" (I have a volcano in my breast), and he had said he had a balcón (balcony) in his breast.⁴ The audience, among whom was Faustino, made itself sick with laughter.

There are many intimate pictures of prison life in the poem, for two of the main characters Luis the murderer and Azucena the wrongfully accused were inmates of the Buenos Aires prison. Apparently the custom was to send all serious cases from the small town to Buenos Aires for judgment, for this was the procedure with both of these characters. The accused had

1. Idem: p. 156.

2. Idem: p. 174.

3. Idem: p. 204.

4. Idem: p. 255.

the opportunity of stating the case to the judge and it was taken down by the scribe. No jury was present at either hearing. Vega gives as his estimate of the judges:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ansí es de que todo alcalde | Thus every magistrate |
| gana su jornal de balde | earns his salary doing nothing, |
| y lo pasa sin fatiga | passing his time without tiring |
| rascándose la barriga. ¹ | himself, with his hands folded. |

He says that for two reales any one in the street would say that a certain person had stolen a flute which he had bought only that day, and the store keeper himself would be there to accuse him and get the flute back again. Then the poor man would stay in prison eight days and have to pay rent for the time he remained.² It seems that a prisoner might fare well if he had funds, as in the case of Luis who played ball, took his siesta, had wine, mate and sugar, tobacco and coffee as a result of Estrella's generosity.³

An interesting custom of the prisons of that day was to send some of its inmates to the plaza on saint's days to ask alms of the public. Luis was especially adept at this for he was remunerated in many cheeses, apples, quinces, ostrich eggs, cakes, bread, cigarettes and money.⁴ There is sufficient evidence that those less fortunate than Luis had not fared so

1. Idem: p. 152.

2. Idem: p. 153.

3. Idem: p. 157.

4. Idem: p. 161.

well as he.

Don Feustino's opinion of the judges was that they spent their time in court sleeping instead of listening to the cases for they came out of the court room yawning and were completely ignorant of what had taken place. He said that they had that sickness called birds in flight in their heads; in other words they were crazy.¹

1. Idem: p. 290.

IX. Linguistic Notes.

An interesting phase of the study of the gauchesque productions would be the language employed. As has been indicated above, certain of these authors have observed the linguistic peculiarities of the gauchos as a realistic device. For a study of these a comparison should be made of the phonetic phenomena found in the several works. Writers differ in their use of the dialect. For example, there is no instance of the use of jué for fué in the Santos Vega of Ascasubi, yet it is of frequent occurrence in Del Campo's Fausto.¹ As yet no such comparison has been made, nor has there been written a definitive work on the origins of the gaucho words.² There will be no attempt in this study to do more than supply a short list of representative phenomena found in the Santos Vega.

ahijuna = ah! hija de una puta.³

ahugaba = ahogaba.⁴

almitió = admitió.⁵

andao = andado.⁶

así mesmo = así mismo.⁷

aonde = a donde.⁸

1. Del Campo: op. cit., pp. 9, 14, 19, 20, 26.

2. Page: op. cit., This study is only superficial.

3. Ascasubi: op. cit., p. 89. 6. Idem: p. 30.

4. Idem: p. 318. 7. Ibid.

5. Idem: p. 91. 8. Idem: p. 98.

aspas = astas.¹
aujeros = agujeros.²
culebreo = culebra.³
ché = oiga (of indigenous origin).⁴
de dir = de ir.⁵
diaonde = de donde.⁶
dijunto = difunto.⁷
escrebida = escribida (escrita).⁸
flaire = fraile.⁹
güella = huella.¹⁰
haiga = haga.¹¹
holla = olla.¹²
inorara = ignorara.¹³
juerte = fuerte.¹⁴
luyendo = huyendo.¹⁵
lagrimiendo = lagrimando.¹⁶
lao = lado.¹⁷
naguas = enaguas.¹⁸
niervos = nervios.¹⁹
nublado = nublado.²⁰

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|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. <u>Idem</u> : p. 143. | 8. <u>Idem</u> : p. 173. | 15. <u>Idem</u> : p. 29. |
| 2. <u>Idem</u> : p. 244. | 9. <u>Idem</u> : p. 29. | 16. <u>Idem</u> : p. 319. |
| 3. <u>Idem</u> : p. 119. | 10. <u>Idem</u> : p. 148. | 17. <u>Idem</u> : p. 36. |
| 4. <u>Idem</u> : p. 180. | 11. <u>Idem</u> : p. 152. | 18. <u>Idem</u> : p. 136. |
| 5. <u>Idem</u> : p. 98. | 12. <u>Idem</u> : p. 248. | 19. <u>Idem</u> : p. 123. |
| 6. <u>Idem</u> : p. 254. | 13. <u>Idem</u> : p. 101. | 20. <u>Idem</u> : p. 226. |
| 7. <u>Idem</u> : p. 70. | 14. <u>Idem</u> : p. 203. | |

pato = pacto.¹

perfeuto = perfecto.²

pión = peón.³

pieses = pies.⁴

?quién sos vos? = ?quién es usted?⁵

redamó = deramó.⁶

respuéndame = respóndame.⁷

riyó = rió.⁸

salú = salud.⁹

soldao = soldado.¹⁰

usté = usted.¹¹

velahí = vea la ahí.¹²

verdá = verdad.¹³

vide = ví.¹⁴

A glossary of typically gaucho expressions has not been included because this has been supplied by the author.

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|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. <u>Idem</u> : p. 272. | 6. <u>Idem</u> : p. 138. | 11. <u>Idem</u> : p. 257. |
| 2. <u>Idem</u> : p. 91. | 7. <u>Idem</u> : p. 80. | 12. <u>Idem</u> : p. 259. |
| 3. <u>Idem</u> : p. 47. | 8. <u>Idem</u> : p. 89. | 13. <u>Idem</u> : p. 230. |
| 4. <u>Idem</u> : p. 209. | 9. <u>Idem</u> : p. 257. | 14. <u>Idem</u> : p. 45. |
| 5. <u>Idem</u> : p. 136. | 10. <u>Idem</u> : p. 251. | |

Conclusion.

This study of the gauchos of Hilario Ascasubi has shown that the gaucho has been an important figure in the colonial, revolutionary and literary history of the Argentine. His numbers and hardiness have made the republic possible; his folk verses have been the inspiration of Argentine men of letters for over a century. He is alive today in the pampas and will continue to live as long as cattle raising is the chief interest of the Argentine republic. Although the gaucho literature has passed its period of greatest production in poetry, in the novel and in the drama, and is now on the wane, the gaucho as a literary and romantic figure will continue to live with his fellow countrymen.

Hilario Ascasubi has been one of the men who has had a part in endearing this romantic figure to the public. He employed in political propaganda the gaucho dialogue form introduced by Hidalgo then went further and freed the gaucho literature from these didactic elements in his romantic and realistic poetic narrative Santos Vega. He served as the inspiration to the great gaucho writers who followed him. One is impressed by the author's understanding of the figure which he is portraying in his whimsical but essentially faithful representation of the gaucho's life and the qualities of his soul.

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